THE SUNKEN GARDEN

by

NATHALIA CRANE

Mrs. L. B. Tuttle.

From Carrie.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/sunkengarden0000kath

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

The Janitor's Boy and Other Poems
Lava Lane and Other Poems

The Sunken Garden

By

NATHALIA CRANE

New York
THOMAS SELTZER
1926

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	*The Tornado*	3
II.	*The Lagoon*	15
III.	*The Second Day*	29
IV.	*Who Art Thou?*	55
V.	*Lance and Fire*	67
VI.	*The Seventh Day*	85
VII.	*Topaz and Tourmaline*	109
VIII.	*Experiments*	127
IX.	*The Avowal*	153
X.	*The Cavern*	177
XI.	*Sanctuary*	203
XII.	*The Ambuscade*	217
XIII.	*London*	231
XIV.	*Reconnaissance*	237

THE SUNKEN GARDEN

THE SUNKEN GARDEN

Chapter I

THE TORNADO

THE ox-eye tornado loomed in the southeast at sundown. Tossing tentacles of black vapor, the aerial octopus advanced swiftly. Instantly the towering timber lines of the African coast were swathed in sable. A crag-crowned islet, a mile from the mainland beaches, was smothered in yellow pall.

Beyond the islet and less than a league seaward, a steam yacht dipped its bow to the torrid swells of the Atlantic. Sailors were working desperately, lashing the hastily rolled after-awnings and making fast the light signal spars. Near the wheel stood a girl who watched with eager interest the approach of the malignant storm.

Suddenly the vessel and islet vanished in obscurity. A mad gale leaped from the bellying blackness; then came the driving, slashing rain—a deluge. Spurts of flame flared in the darkness, followed by rending thunder and the sound of crashing forest growths on the mainland. Giant bombax and cottonwood-trees were being riven to their bases by electric bolts. Smaller boles were being torn from the soil and hurled into the now ravenous surf. The wind wrenched from every insecure shelter of the coast bird, beast and reptile and spilled them into the sea.

A pronged flame shot over the Atlantic. The momentary incandescence revealed the steam yacht in the grip of submerging billows, dismasted and on fire. The yacht was sinking. A small boat was being lowered.

The same electric discharge offered a tragic glimpse of the mainland sands. Upon the beach a human form was thrown into

silhouette. It was that of a youth sent hurtling along the shore. A falling tree struck him down, and the surf swept him away.

For three dreadful hours the tornado lashed earth and sea; then of a sudden it gave place to a starless calm. The vicious surf subsided into sullen combers; the sulphurous fumes scattered, and a peaceful darkness gentled the troubled terrain.

But during the night there were two significant events.

A small ship's boat, bearing an unconscious girl, was washed through a hooded passage into the lagoon on the southwestern projection of the islet.

Within the same hour the godling, swept from the mainland sands, was thrown senseless upon the eastern ledges of the same islet.

The storm occurred the evening of November 23, 1924. The equatorial islet upon

which these companions in adversity were flung is charted as one mile from the West African coast, north latitude 0° 55′ 0″. Sixty miles to the southward opens the estuary of the Gaboon, once the haunt of slavers. To the northward there stretches a coast-line shrouded in unexplored jungles and mysterious forests, the lairage of the lion, the leopard, the gorilla and the python regius.

Over this stretch of sea border and ever since time first fixed the tempo of the years, there has rested the full sovereignty of solitude. Here all the colors hidden in the primal caverns have congregated and lavished their lustrous tints upon a wild, mid-African landscape. The topaz flames in the foliage, rubies and emeralds of gorgeous girth stare from the massive screens of climbers, and the enormous mantles of the sago-palms and cottonwood-trees are dazzling fabrics painted with the hues of amethyst and sapphire.

Three thousand years ago there were rumors of this loveliness, rumors that sent the Grecian galleys, the argosies of Egypt, of Carthage and of Rome through the Pillars of Hercules in search of a strange, sumptuous clime to the southward.

Many of these loin-cloth voyagers turned their prows homeward before the oar ports were parallel with the bellying West African shore. A few continued the adventure and drifted beyond the Gold Coast into the Gulf of Guinea, lured onward by the perfumed vapors and glamorous scenery. Of these galleys it is certain that some were caught in the grip of the equatorial tempests and tossed as rubbish upon the beaches, but at long intervals during these early centuries the sea may have spared a few score survivors, men and women of the Greeks, Egyptians, Romans, Carthaginians.

These roamers in galleys were not the only early white voyagers. In the thirteenth cen-

tury there flowed a deluge of adolescence from Europe. Bewitched columns of children, in the strangest of all human crusades, marched from their northern havens to save Palestine from the clutch of the Moslems.

In massed legions, numbering one hundred thousand, and suffering all the vicissitudes of an army, this unweaponed infantry of French and German infants swarmed down upon the Mediterranean ports seeking embarkation. The most important thing in the whole world was to save the Holy Land. Their authority was the text, "A little child shall lead them," and this authority awed parents, kindred and counselors of state, so that all stood aside and permitted the exodus, permitted this great going out of the youth of all classes, garmented in the belief in miracles and lanterned by the mysticism of the Middle Ages.

Of the western columns, thousands took ship at Marseilles. They trooped aboard the

grotesque craft placed at their disposal, undecked gulafres, cats, and dromons. Some sailed without navigators, believing that angels would stand at their helms.

Storms drove them upon rocky shores. Those who survived shipwreck perished from privation and exposure. And the corsairs of the period dragged thousands to slavery in Mohammedan lands. The traffic in the children extended along the entire North African coast and from Alexandria to Bagdad.

But of the flotillas that escaped capture or wreckage on the Barbary rim, some are believed to have taken a western course. These were the lucky contingents that sailed without advisers and cared not for details in regard to destination. They presumed that the sun was always journeying toward Palestine, and they followed. Lenient winds drew them through the Strait of Gibraltar into the unharried blue of the Atlantic, where a se-

ductive current sweeps southward along the western border of Africa. That these thirteenth-century galleasses of the childish crusaders yielded to this current and fared down the periodically benign fairway, seems a more reasonable assumption than that they strove for the buffeting of the outer seas; and that these juvenile Jasons and Joans lived to colonize an African upland is a conceivable and acceptable theory.

A Grecian or Carthaginian galley slips around the moon-curve of the West African coast and disappears forever in the haze of some tropical twilight. This is the first discernible movement of the preliminaries for a later rendezvous.

A thousand centuries bud and wither, then —second movement—down the same mystical and predestined course stream the carefully diverted remnants, the galleasses and saics of the Crusade of the Children.

The scroll of the twentieth century is un-

rolled to a certain date, and a tornado, the black, storming column of the genii, rushes northward from the gaping sally-port of the Gaboon. This is the third of the distinguishable maneuvers in a divine sequence. Through the wizardry of a storm a yacht with a girl near the wheel is wrecked upon a barbarous strand, and a sun-gilded wilding, a forest youth, is torn from a shore covert and driven, amid weltering forest debris, into the frenzied breakers.

Up from the precincts of the primal brew
There swam a painted bubble into view;
Its sides were sheened by tidal rise and fall—
It seemed a rainbow wound into a ball.
'Twas thus was made the first of all settees—
A tussocked bench that tilted to the seas.
A geyser swayed and strewed an irised sap,
The fern advanced from out the marshland's lap.

—*Nathalia Crane*

Chapter II

THE LAGOON

THE lagoon of the islet into which the derelict boat had been washed was masked by a projecting buttress of red granite, a segment of the tiered crags that girded the isle, pierced by an arch, which formed a watery vestibule partially blocked by a submerged ledge but negotiable at intervals. Over this submerged ledge the flood and ebb tides broke or sucked, filling or half emptying by turns the sand-rimmed basin of the lagoon.

This pulsing pool, animated by the tide, was not over a thousand yards in circumference. Lofty ledges of the girdling cliffs embraced the oval sheet upon the western side, and the tangled wild of the inner solitude completed the setting.

Long after dawn the African sun topped

the cliffs and poured burnished rays upon this aqueous jewel.

Close to the wooded shore of this enchanting area of water was the derelict boat. Half filled with brine it rolled soddenly a few feet from a shingle of golden sand.

At the stern lay the huddled form of the young girl encased in a seaman's oilskin. Her body was covered by the wash of the water-logged life-boat, but her head was above the brine and rested upon the after-thwart. A profusion of gleaming tresses cascaded over the awkward collar of the oilskin.

When the tropical heat commenced to warm her blood, she stirred slothfully and finally made an attempt to rise, but was baffled by a lacing of halliard rope, looped cunningly about her waist and knotted to gunwale rings. This had proved her salvation during the night when the life-boat had capsized a score of times in its shoreward drift.

But now the clinging coil was a menacing death-trap, and again the girl tried to free herself from the sinister lashings. In frenzy she thrust her hands from the muffling sleeves of the oilskin and with twitching fingers clutched at the water-soaked knots in the gunwale rings; the double hitches defied her. Her head sank in exhaustion on the afterthwart.

When, however, after a time, she renewed the struggle, there was no longer spasmodic plucking at the knots; her movements suggested a definite plan. She raised the heavy sleeves above her head, and writhed downward through the cloak; the bronze tresses disappeared, and the garment slouched and collapsed.

For seconds she fought under the wash with uplifted arms; her underclothing impeded her efforts at release. She ripped and tore the flimsy draperies. Reluctantly the

waist coil slipped above her shoulders. She wrenched away the last folds of the oilskin. She was free.

Gasping she rose, nude as a naiad, adorned only in the loveliness of youthful efflorescence.

She stood in the boat, trembling and uttering low cries of relief and amazement as she stared with wide gray eyes at the sun-flecked lagoon and the panoply of palm-trees that formed the inviting background of the miniature strand.

She sprang unsteadily from the wrecked boat to the yellow sands. Though swaying from weakness she succeeded in reaching the shade area of a group of mangroves. There she fell in a swoon. Afterwards weariness lulled her into the deep sleep of utter exhaustion.

The castaway was not over sixteen years old. Somnolent upon the soft border grasses, she seemed like some distrait shepherdess

torn from the heart of a pastoral and cast by fate upon a barren and uncharted atoll.

That she was from a northern clime seemed certain from the fairness of her skin. Her rapidly drying tresses gleamed against her full throat and fell in gypsy whorls upon one white shoulder, but did not conceal her profile, the low Grecian forehead, the straight, delicately formed nose, the Moresque fullness of the lips, the daintiness of chin.

From this beautiful creature, stripped of all identifying raiment, there emanated the voiceless accents of culture. Beyond the mists of the Eight Stones, beyond the sullen barriers of the sea, was her realm, the empire that had nurtured her, the empire that in a chosen hour would pluck this constrained daughter from the concealed cavity of a tropical tazza, where she had passed the portals of security and dropped the catalogue of the commonplace.

In ascending arc the sun flooded the insular wilderness with light and heat. During the morning there was a perceptible recession of the water in the lagoon, and the life-boat, with gunwales nearly awash, drifted to the narrow entrance channel and was sucked over the submerged ledge out to the sea.

The dreamless slumber of the castaway continued far into the afternoon. So deep was this repose that the capricious cries of orange-red and olive-colored parrots did not disturb her siesta.

But an hour before sundown, while the sky still presented its zone of turquoise, a nervous spasm shook the sleeper into open-eyed wakefulness. The suddenness and horror of the withdrawal from all things lenient and comforting still pressed closely upon her, yet the persistent currents of vitality had rallied in slumber and raised the chief defense of youth.

In an instant she was in an alert, crouching

posture, but there was nothing to affright her. Instantly aware of her lack of garments, she rose and walked steadily to the shelter of a screen of matted vines. From the foliage she surveyed the strange retreat. The seclusion of the shores of the lagoon gave her courage, and the boldness of the gossiping birds finally assured her that no human intruders were near the borders of the lagoon. It was the first intimation that she was utterly alone.

The shock of the mental revelation as to her predicament had been sustained. With the opening of her eyes she had recognized and armed herself against the vicissitudes of chance. More pressing than memory of storm and shipwreck, was the realization that she lived and was unharmed. Meditatively she massaged herself and felt with investigating fingers for wounds or other injuries; there were none.

She thought of the sinking yacht and shud-

dered. She recalled the sudden darkening of the sky, the ravaging wind, the blasting lightning, the terrific explosion and the rush of flame. A sailor had tossed her into the lifeboat. Others had entered the boat, and one man moving like an automaton had smothered her in the oilskin and lashed her fast. The boat had descended into the drenching black horror of the night and had capsized. She had no further recollection of the catastrophe. She knew that blessed unconsciousness had intervened and held her until the restoration of her senses in the lagoon.

The gray eyes scanned the pool for the water-logged craft. There was the desire to salvage the tattered undergarments and even the distasteful oilskin. The boat had vanished, and a glance at the arched channel leading to the sea solved the manner of its disappearance.

She did not weep. She was alive, and hope was already whispering words of counsel and

gratitude. Thrusting aside some of the interlacing vines under the mangroves, she formed them into leafy partitions and made a crude natural boudoir of the masses of clustering climbers.

The lull of late afternoon held the tropical islet as in a cordon of dreams. The birds hushed their cries, and no sounds issued from the inner wild. Only the murmur of the surf, and an odd tinkling close at hand touched her ears.

It nudged her curiosity. Listening, she noticed that it came from a mass of giant creepers a few feet from her improvised nest. She swept aside the festoons of a scarlet stalk, and through the leafy transom spied the source of the silver-tongued Giralda that was multiplying its cadences with such faithfulness to the treble.

From the breast of a moss-thatched boulder a tiny stream of glistening water cleared a fairy declivity and descended into

a cavity in the waist of the rock. The water was sweet and cool. The castaway drank eagerly. She bathed freely and then raised her arms to coil her drifting hair. Her right hand encountered a swaying cluster of plantains. She caught the yielding stalk, garnered the ripe fruit, and realized with thankful heart that solicitous nature had literally forced food into her empty hands.

No longer thirsty, no longer hungry, she entered her vine-fringed nest and sought distraction in the weaving of a rough kirtle from the plantain leaves.

Often she paused to peer through the foliage at the strange, richly colored birds that haunted the margin of the lagoon and the borders of the miniature hinterland. There were golden-haired flycatchers, birds of paradise, fire-tailed humming-birds, macaws feathered in red and blue, and here and there a crimson lory.

In the dusk the parrots ceased their jan-

gling. The moonless night closed in swiftly. The mistress of the isle slept tranquilly and unmolested.

It was as if the spirits of many ancient things, wearying of a tenantless isle, had suddenly demanded the presence of a modern occupant.

Or ever the arts of an olden day
Had painted the screens of joy,
There came to sit on a sun-burned crag
The rôle of the shepherd boy.

—*Nathalia Crane*

Chapter III

THE SECOND DAY

THE macaws, taunting at dawn, aroused the fair sojourner. She rose, health and hope glowing in her eyes. The buoyancy of unblemished youth was rallying to her aid. Again she drank and bathed beside the boulder spring and broke her fast with the plantains. Her movements were deliberate. This heiress of the latest civilization, stripped of social protection and even of her accustomed habiliments, knew that she was confronting the oldest of all sponsors, the raw earth, clad in the fungus and the fern.

Adjusting the leafy, vine-stitched kirtle she followed the shore of the lagoon to the northern margin and soon reached the base of the granite scarp that towered a hundred feet and ringed the islet. The inner slope of

the scarp was gentle and offered easy climbing. The girl scaled the rise and from the summit examined her environment.

She had supposed that she was on the African mainland, but a sweeping glance assured her that she was caged on an outlying island fastness. The island was a deep hollow far below the sea level and belted by cliffs. Her new domain was scarcely three miles in diameter and less than twelve in circumference. It was shaped like a cup with an oval bowl. The handle of the cup was formed by the protruding southern buttress that marked the sea channel to the lagoon. The rim of the cup was the circlet of granite.

But the view offered recompense. The castaway was poised above a gorgeous natural cyclorama wherein color and form rivaled the arabesque. If the interior of the islet was a bowl, it contained a ravishing spectacle. It was like unto a sunken garden, a riot of red and yellow and green. There were the tropi-

cal trees, the plumed plants and painted grasses, motionless and unsubstantial in the equatorial calm. There were the placid palm-fringed pools mirroring the azure sky, wild, tangled dells of flower and shrub and vine and secret haunts where giant ferns grew rank by fetid fens. Certain inner areas were so clouded with fungus and vegetable tentage that the mysterious forest runways below were cloaked from all inspection.

Gazing beyond the islet she saw the African mainland, less than a mile from the eastern cliffs of her lonely station. Northward, eastward and southward stretched the Saharic wastes of the Atlantic. She raised her arms in supplication but there was no answering flash of sail from the horizon.

She descended the scarp, retraced her way around the lagoon and sought the sea passage under the arch. A narrow side shelf of rock, uncovered by the ebb tide, extended to the outer beach. She ventured over the slip-

pery platform. Beyond the buttress arch she found herself outside the walls of the insular bastile. The water was ebbing rapidly, and already a few yards of boulder-strewn beach was exposed.

Cherishing hope of finding other survivors of the wreck, she turned eastward. Approaching an angle where the granite ridge upon her left broke sharply into a parallel with the mainland, she came upon the debris of blasted and uprooted trees, visible signs of the tornado's violence. Massive cottonwood boles, storm and surf driven from the mainland coast, were wedged among the beach boulders. Interlocked with straddling roots and branches were the more delicate boles of shattered palms and bamboos.

The bodies of dead animals lolled from the forks of driftwood branches. There were goat-shaped creatures, the carcasses of small red deer, porcupines and mutilated birds. A thousand vicious crabs were upon the shat-

tered boles and boulders, clawing the storm spoils.

The girl conquered her feelings of faintness and fear. Each step told her of the futility of the search, but the oppressive sense of isolation urged her forward.

When directly opposite the mainland coast she found herself abreast of a gaping chasm extending into the insular buttress. Into this chasm the surf had rammed the splintered trunk of a white mangrove. The tree had been riven by lightning. This gorge gradually narrowed to a point that promised easy ascent of the cliff, and it was in a direct line with the sheltering shores of the lagoon. It offered a less tragic route of return. The debris barred further exploration of the beach.

Entering the chasm the castaway ventured along its noisome length until she came to a narrow slope that resembled a foot-path. She was close to a slit-like opening in the granite,

near the summits of the crags, when a wailing human cry, the cry of the wounded, assaulted the air.

The girl pressed her hands to her breast and voiced an eager response. She believed that at least one of her companions of the sea disaster had reached the strange shore despite the stress of storm and wreck. She struggled forward, stumbling against fire-bushes and stony spurs dominoed in moss.

The gap in the granite did not disappoint her. Beyond the orifice she could see the tops of the island palms, the palms of the sunken wild. She advanced through the cleft. Again the sobbing wail of distress, and close at hand. There, lying at her feet in the shadow of a jutting spur, was a human being of youthful mold. Bloody foam clung to his lips, and the left arm was discolored and swollen.

Amazement, horror, fascination held the girl in a frozen pose. If there was an im-

pulse to flight, it was stayed by utter astonishment and pity. She had thought to find a shipwrecked friend or seaman. Instead she had chanced upon a boyish barbarian of the African wilderness. Her mind groped for an explanation. She leaned with upraised arms against the crags and glanced downward through the chasm.

In one swift reversion she visioned the storm and the course of the shattered tree in the rent below, and had her answer. She saw in the sufferer another victim of the tornado, tossed by tempestuous seas and hurled bruised and mortally injured into the chasm.

The mercies of life rose in her heart. Measuring with her eyes the direction of the lagoon she hastened down the inner declivity and for the first time entered the island valley. Even in her excitement she felt the entrancing beauty of the Sunken Garden. Gaudy grasses, shoulder high, and tall-stemmed blossoming plants, heavy with ex-

otic blooms, caressed her limbs. The air was burdened with sweet odors. There were wild fig-trees, orange-trees and stalks laden with pineapples. Strangely shaped gourds with vines as big as cables formed treacherous meshes on the ground.

Selecting two of the gourds, she carried them to the lagoon. There she crushed in the tops with a stone and cleared away the coarse seeds. She filled the empty rinds with water from the boulder spring. Then, balancing the gourds upon her shoulders, she reentered the wild. Not until she had reached the base of the eastern rock barrier could she discern the identifying gap in the upper tier of granite.

The young barbarian with closed eyes lay under the projecting ledge and in the same inanimate posture.

With leaves for linen, she ministered tenderly and sponged the blood-flecked mouth. She poured water between the drawn lips

and deftly straightened the injured arm. When the stertorous breathing was again broken by a moaning cry, the girl repeated her ministrations. But her amazement swept aside all other emotions.

Despite his youth—she thought him to be about her own age—this sun-gilded wilding was muscled like an athlete. For minutes she stared at the brightly coppered face of the mysterious occupant of the niche. Here was a marvel that equalled her own miraculous escape. The youth, tossed upon the islet by the same tornado that had destroyed the yacht, was undoubtedly a rude savage, a young wastrel of the mainland wilderness. And yet, despite her stupefaction, she noted the Nordic modeling of the features. The hair, tousled by sea and wind, gave the youth's head an unkempt appearance, but it was the yellow headgear of a northern land.

Fearfully but curiously the castaway studied the strange trespasser. Finally, to

curb her surmises and imaginings, she fled down the slope and sought one of the shady arbors in the valley. But the restlessness of suspense soon sent her straying through the vined vistas and sun-flecked plazas. Often she paused to pluck an orange, or a handful of wild plums. Wearied by the tension of her nerves she seated herself in the shadow of a great palm and ate of the fruit she had collected, but with many a pause, and with meditating eyes.

Composure is the natural complement of youth; the surges of grief, fear and surprise, after the first shock, swiftly recede. Then comes speculation.

That this girl waif possessed a studious and resourceful mind was evident from the manner in which she comported herself amid the stunning crescendos of a dismaying adventure.

She had never before seen a real barbarian, and conned her memory for portrayals of sav-

age existence, sifting in thought scores of pictures, prints and paintings of primal life. Hordes of aborigines, Australian Bushmen, Kaffirs, dark-skinned Nubians and Papuan grotesques trooped before her in groups. These phantoms from picture books and art galleries, however, bore no resemblance to the creature of the cliff.

Was the forest foundling merely a fantastic oversight of the ages, a survival of the caveman strain, or from the more modernized spawn of equatorial lairages?

Her mind was obsessed by the problem, and she strove for a fitting solution, an answer that would in a measure explain the identity of the stricken one lying helpless and unconscious in the crags.

Slowly she classified the impressions of the encounter.

Discounting the effect of the unshorn tangle of yellow hair, and the masking stain of copper on the face, she found herself admit-

ting that the features were those of a Caucasian youth. There was a betraying symmetry, an undeniable regularity of lineaments. She remembered that the eyebrows were of a darker shade than the hair and were lined with the straightness of the thinker. She wondered as to the color of his eyes.

Suddenly from her unguarded thoughts there sprang a presentiment, a complete and vivid realization of the perils of her environment. She was a fugitive upon a plot of weed-rank rubble, an outcropping of the sea that was little better than a glorified reef. The elements had deposited upon the very doorstep of her refuge a magnified urchin of the African waste. She rose, clutching her hair. She stung her forehead with a sharp blow of the palm as if in self-chastisement for her denseness.

She saw herself marooned, defenseless and lacking all the safeguards of civilization, and

with the burden of a distasteful association thrust upon her.

The truth for her at that moment was that the occupant of the cliff might be an atavism, a reincarnation of the prototype of man, or an unpigmented native.

Tales and legends of physical departures from the normal crowded upon her. In all races there were albinos, but these unpigmented ones differed in no other characteristic from their kind. Their whitened eyes carried the same movements, and they were not immune to ancestral ferocity and duplicity.

Frenzied by the presumed revelation, she seized upon the hypothesis as if it were the truth, and her terrified gaze swept the margin of the ledges, as if expectant of the appearance of an archaic denizen of the stone age.

The raucous scream of a gaily garbed parrot, swinging from the frond of a palm, was

the only sound that disturbed the heavy serenity of the great well of the islet. The girl sank to the ground, and the paroxysm of fear left her. Reason took the offensive, and slowly outlined a campaign promising security until the hour of rescue.

The nameless invader of her unsought sanctuary could not subject her to any immediate interference. The severity of his injuries had, for the time being, rendered him powerless to leave his cell in the crags. In his semiconscious condition he would not have been aware of her presence. If, in truth, he came from the mainland, his first thought on recovering strength would be to return there. A mere islet would offer few attractions to a wood roamer used to the freedom of continental forests. He would depart ignorant of her presence in the tazza. The water gourds would offer no clue as to her identity, and it would be illogical to suppose that a mere savage, longing for his ac-

customed mainland haunts, would spend much time in seeking an explanation of their presence. He would see only a couple of vine melons with broken tops, half filled with rain water. While her calculations concerned the recovery of the youth, the way seemed open to an unmolested tenancy of the islet. The most pressing cause of anxiety and fear would be removed if the unwelcome stray rallied and returned to his own basking grounds.

But would he recover? Perchance there were other injuries beside the swollen arm. She dwelt upon the horror of her own recent plight in the ship's boat, and saw the parallel in the case of the wilding helpless on a ledge in the cliff.

Unattended, there was but the barest chance that he would survive. She considered the apparent extremity of his condition, and saw the absolute responsibility of the moment. Already death might be groping for this other bantling of fate.

The thought drove aside all speculations as to personal peril. If there was a double purpose in her determination to return to the scene of her discovery, the predominating one was duty.

The death of the wood wastrel would assure her of the unannoyed sovereignty of the islet, but she did not care for sovereignty at such a price. She sensed a new feeling of grief not fully understood, and to make sure that dissolution had not already forestalled her, she rose and hastened toward the rocky embouchure.

In her excitement, and as an unconscious epitome of her first mood, she stooped, searching for some rude weapon of defense. Heedless of selection, she caught up a round object from the soil and sped to the point of ascent.

She paused for an instant upon the scanty threshold of the shallow cavity and then advanced timorously and on tiptoe. She stared,

appraising, at the stricken phenomenon upon the ledge. A hundred doubts assailed her. Conviction was no longer conviction.

The youth lay in the same inert attitude, but the heavy breathing was stilled. The yellow hair, colored like the full corn, and the sun-tinted skin called for dismissal of the suspicion that the encroacher was an albino, but the eyes of the human cryptogram upon the ledge were closed, and the conclusive evidence was closeted.

The castaway bent over the now composed face of the sufferer, and a feeling of utter pity touched her. The discolored foam no longer rose to the lips, and as she studied the features of the unsolvable human glyph, the last traces of aversion vanished from her mind. Admitting, as she did, that he might be a surviving blood-token of the times of the cave-dwellers, there was no present cause for alarm in the discovery. Europe, the

Americans, and in fact the whole world acknowledged the same remote ancestry.

There was silence in the interstice. The youth no longer moaned. The calm was terrifying. Was he dead?

With trembling fingers she touched the forehead of the atavism.

The response was startling. The copper eyelids of the supposed troglodyte, operated as by an invisible spring, snapped back, and the young mistress of the isle found herself gazing into mournful brown eyes, luminous with patience and intelligence.

There was no taint of ferocity or cunning in these suddenly unmasked torches. The expression was one of somber surprise, quickly magnified to the innocent amazement of a young novitiate.

The castaway was spellbound. She was removed from all comprehension of time and place. The two victims of the storm stared at each other. The brown orbs of the young

viceroy of the provinces of the past grew lustrous as with the certainty of some angelic visitation; the gray eyes of the girl saw the curtains of the centuries slowly drawn apart, revealing in symbolic sequences the immortal verities of faith and hope and joy.

The compelling fascination of the moment passed, and again uncertainty gripped her. In her distraction she glanced downward and strove to recover the half-forgotten audacity of childhood in order to improvise an orderly retreat.

In her right hand she was still clutching the object she had so heedlessly selected as a weapon, nothing more, she now saw, than a brightly stained orange.

In her confusion she held the fruit out before the eyes of the disabled Adonis. He raised his uninjured hand, gently took the offered fruit from her palm, and with a gesture marked by quiet courtesy deposited the orange upon the ledge. The gratitude and

serenity of the simple action were appealing and convincing.

Slowly, and as if she were the shadowy serving girl of an elaborately staged hallucination, the castaway returned to the valley. She gathered wild dates, clusters of grapes, and scented leaves. Then she returned and placed her gifts beside the youth.

The leaves she applied as a rude bandage and easements for the injured arm. The water gourds were at hand, and the fruit within easy reach.

At peace with her conscience she turned and left the interstice, but dared one backward glance. The copper eyelids were closed; the image of the past had lapsed into a deep and painless slumber.

On her return through the sunken wild she remembered little except one or two odd phases of the numbing beauty of the enchanted area. The stunning effect of her

adventure still held her in thrall, and she trod the painted vistas as the creature of a dream.

Once she chanced upon a huge pinnacle rock, veined like Asiatic marble, a monstrous needle that towered above the palms, from the top of which shot a glittering green cascade that petulantly cleared the angles of the obelisk for its plunge, and ended at the base in a smother of foam and spray. The wonder of a torrent climbing the hollow of a pinnacle rock did not touch her at the time. She cupped her hands for the spray and drank because she was thirsty. She remained for an hour near the great stone spike for the sake of rest, and watched the dazzling ribbon of green fall a sheer hundred feet and disappear in a flurry of spume. Here was water mimicking a miracle, prancing upward, defying its own passion for a level, oblivious of the laws of physics, and then spilling itself in vertical flight. The girl found a soothing

influence in the magical cascade. It was as if the beginning and end of all things were portrayed in the birth and downward pilgrimage of the tiny cataract.

The day was already feeling the strictures of twilight when the castaway again turned toward the lagoon. In the growing gloom she was forced to seek for glimpses of the towering buttress on the eastern side of the islet in order to keep from going astray in the valley.

The spirit of the wild changed with the approach of nightfall. The very palms that lined the fringed passages became accessories to the general air of uneasiness, and the scrub growths assumed ghostly guises in the shadows. The hitherto inanimate boles of the bamboos creaked, and there was a sepulchral taint, a morbid exhalation that broke in spirals from the soil. These miasmal wraiths fluttered along the darkened grass alleys

garbed in their poisonous cerements until each vista became a corpse-walk.

But there was a more material peril than these wavering gases; a danger had developed with the approach of sundown. Something was abroad in the weed-and-tree-cluttered mezzanine of the islet, something intangible, merely because of the gathering darkness. This splotched horror trod the trail of the girl as far as the pinnacle. There it chanced upon another kind of prey.

The castaway heard the cry of an animal in its death agony, and she ran for the safety of the lagoon. As she issued from the sunken wild, a gigantic moth flapped its wings in her face and soared upward. Others of the same kind, enormous tropical nightlings, were flitting over the sandy terrace. They swooped past her, vaunting their two-foot spread of wing and revealing their raiment of vermillion and magenta. The night had put forth its own inhabitants, but thus far had ushered

only the lenient ones to the shores of the basin.

Wearily the maid crossed the sandy plateau and entered the frail barricade of vines. Within a few minutes she was asleep.

The cactus came, a torrid maid at dawn,
She bore a comb, the prickle and the thorn;
The plants presumed to tendencies of power
And planned for her the dowry of an hour.

—*Nathalia Crane*

Chapter IV

WHO ART THOU?

Bevies of birds, seeking to preémpt the boulder spring, awakened her at dawn. She listened with amused tolerance to the incessant bickering and was surprised when she found that the plumed pouters did not resent her presence. One young parrot fluttered to her shoulder and remained there until accorded the right to a near perch. She straightway named this friendly bird Sindbad, and left him cogitating upon a branch when she ran to the pool for a morning bath. The water was tepid but invigorating and gave her renewed confidence and vigor.

Plantains and other fruits gathered along the borders of the basin were her breakfast, and these pulps she shared with her winged friend of the spring.

Purposely she banished all thoughts of the escapade on the eastern cliff until she had completed her toilet and broken her fast. The need of a comb troubled her; it forced her to an expedient. Stripping a cactus of a dozen thorns by sharp blows of a stone, she dulled the points and braided the spaced bodkins into a thong of grass. This roughly contrived accessory proved flexible and gave the service the tangled hair required.

It also taught her with a brevity almost unbelievable that many other crude equivalents were within reach of her wits, and that a measure of comfort might be drawn from the apparently characterless materials so freely scattered about her.

The morning had brought its own atmosphere, full of balsamic fragrance and bolstered with the freshness of the sea.

Like a young Diana she traversed the margin of the valley, plucking slender plant pinions and the tougher leafage of the dwarf-

trees. There were stalks that yielded thread strippings as strong as linen, and soon she had collected the materials for a new garment. She carried her stock to the bower and would have gone beyond the lagoon zone in search of new treasures, but the inner wild terrified her after yesterday's experience and she feared to venture across the borders.

Not until she had begun the task of fashioning a new and more elaborate kirtle did she permit her thoughts to catalogue the events of the previous day.

Was the atavism of the eastern crags some primeval anachronism, a soul drawn from an ancient orbit of life through some kindly blunder of nature, or was the youth a superbiped, unknown to modern civilization, awaiting later advent into the recognized circles of modernity?

Naturally, after such a presentation of the primal, the mind revived the likenesses of the young gods of the Greeks and Romans. The

girl spread out her remembrances of school mythologies, with their undress rehearsals and temple travesties, and then reverted to the sculptured presentments of the heroes and striplings of antiquity. She recalled the marble David of Michael Angelo, which she had seen while visiting Florence, and the contours of the chiseled Captive set in the Louvre. These last were the closest comparisons and approached the reality she had witnessed.

What of the brown eyes? she asked herself, as she sat basting the leaves. Surely no wood-haunter or progeny of the caveman ever possessed such appealing and disturbing orbs. Where was the expression she had at first expected, the cruelty and guile of one accustomed to the brutal strata of life? Not in the mystical wells she had gazed into. Instead, there had shone gratitude, wonder and pleasure.

She dined at noon on the wild fruits and

then returned to her plaiting. She was still completely baffled by the contradictory responses that her analysis evoked. Her remembrance of the features made it certain that he was not an aborigine. The yellow hair and bright metallic coloring defied such intimations, and the eloquent colorful eyes shattered the theory that he was a mere west-coast albino.

No, the indelible index of a northern nativity was stamped upon the face of this young runner of African wildernesses. His forbears were of European strain. The straight brows and the entire molding of the visage told the tale. Her own case furnished experiences that were easily transferred to that of her companion of the cliff. He, in turn, might be the survivor of some shipwreck set back a decade, a single castaway like herself, who as a child had managed to escape the physical perils of the place and had early learned to adapt himself to the

hazards of the fronded, beast-patrolled precincts of the mainland.

This simple, lucid explanation agreed with such facts as were within her grasp. She remembered that the youth had worn an odd ornament on his neck, and she sought to recall the design of the small charm or keepsake, as she supposed it to be. It was suspended by a narrow thong, and strangely partook of the color of the storm-straggler's skin. It was oval in shape and with indentations similar to carved lettering.

It was late in the afternoon when she donned the new kirtle, colored with the natural dyes of the leaves and edged with braidings of grass. Throughout the day there had been complete silence in the tree-smothered solitude that separated her from the wounded adventurer, but she dared not make a second journey while the terror of her recent flight flaunted a warning. The scream of the stricken animal beat upon her ears at intervals

and gave her understanding that she had not fathomed all of the fateful possibilities of her unsolicited heritage.

At times her thoughts were given to her homeland, to kin and friends, and in surrender to sorrow and loneliness she wept in the frail lattice, the benignant shelter that meekly gave its only solace, that of privacy.

These brief periods of despair were with her throughout the day, and shortly before twilight she sought to master the dark moods by a pilgrimage along the margin of the lagoon. In some sections there were broad sandy spaces before the edges of the basin area came into contact with the palmed valley. Along the border she found gourds gaily decorated and of many sizes and shapes.

Employment offered distraction, so she collected a number and emptied them of seeds and pulp. She placed a small calabash on the rocky overhang of the boulder spring and filled another with the juice of wild

plums. Earlier in the day she had formed the resolution that she would not desert the helpless one on the cliff. Without attendance and supervision the youth would die. The thought was unbearable. But for the dispensations of providence there might have been a hideous reversal of their fortunes. She pictured herself as hurt and helpless in one of the stony bastions of the islet's barricade.

Then she knew that with the coming of another morning she would dare the sullen glades of the depressed territory, knew that she would carry food and water and civilized cheer to her fellow-captive.

Darkness came with leaps because the towering parapets of stone excluded the lowered rays of the sun, and with the half-light the gigantic moths reappeared from their hiding places and commenced their winged gambols over the pool and margin coverts. From the portal of her vined cloister the castaway watched the ceaseless coming and going of

these Gargantuan paragons of the night. They dipped and swung in wide circles, sometimes disappearing in the hardly discernible foliage of border, and again issuing, several minutes later, from the same leafy portages. So marked were some of the huge black and vermilion night gypsies that identification of individuals was easy, and so exact were their departures and reappearances that the girl, deeply interested, fell to timing them by counting aloud the intervening seconds. The absences invariably covered a three-minute period.

If the moths had constituted the only wonder of the islet, their presence alone would have given it a fabulous reputation.

The stars were burning with unusual brilliancy when she stepped inside the bower and blocked the doorway with a heap of trailers. For a while she listened for threatening sounds from the morass, but the area sent forth no alarming noises.

For the first time since the shipwreck she gave herself to prayer, making her petitions in the full understanding that she was not the sole occupant of the islet, and that the potency of such overtures is measured by sympathy and faith.

The lapping of the tidal flow in the basin soothed her. She fell to planning for the morrow and for a system by which a reckoning of the days could be kept. In her drifting thoughts she visioned her own rescue and the return to her lost homeland.

In the midst of these hopeful forecasts, she fell asleep.

Nature, for pastime, doth a coast bewitch,
Squeezes a promontory to a niche;
Puts in a tenant longing to be free,
Who straightway turns into an absentee.

—*Nathalia Crane*

Chapter V

LANCE AND FIRE

THE sun of the fourth morning damasked the lagoon with a wealth of reflection. The parrots early opened their pageant in the trees. The nude beauty in the sanctuary of the vine arbor awakened in a fretful mood.

She felt a responsibility that seemed to beckon and lure her beyond the circle of her own welfare. And yet she knew that she must comply and enter the role of a sister of mercy for the sake of her nameless companion.

After bathing and breakfasting on wild fruit she prepared for the brief journey across the suspected area. She had saved the calabashes for the morning's errand. One contained the highly flavored juice of the wild plums, the second was filled with water.

From cactus leaves she improvised a small pouch equipped with a fiber sling adjustable to the shoulder. This she loaded with plantains. Keeping to the more open glades and fairways she passed swiftly through the palm vistas and reached the base of the eastern crags in safety.

There she paused. For some minutes uneasiness and an uncoded shame sapped her courage. When she began to climb the height she advanced slowly, charged with doubt and dismay.

At last she was on a level leading to the niche. She bent forward staring into the cranny.

The ledge under the jutting crag was bare; the wounded intruder had vanished. The emptiness of the aperture was terrifying. It raised all manner of forebodings. In imagination she saw the creature rising in delirium and staggering off to some deeper recess to die. She blamed herself for the neg-

lect of the previous day, and then made a brief survey for many yards on either side of the gorge in the hope of locating the youth. There were no similar recesses, and the concave rim of the granite gave little promise of concealment.

Easing herself of her burden of fruit, she caught at the rocky lintel of the niche for support. She had not dreamed that the absence of the intruder would so affect her. She felt a sudden faintness and seated herself upon the vacant ledge. The gourds she had brought on her first visit were still on the stone slab, but they were now empty. The fruit had disappeared and not so much as a scrap of orange skin littered the seamy flooring.

The girl was shaken by a deadly chill. What did this sudden abandonment of the ledge portend? Certainly the youth could not have recovered strength and the use of an injured arm in the meager handful of

hours that had elapsed since she last saw him.

And yet he had gone away, and evidently by his own volition. Could he have found a way of rafting himself across to the mainland? It did not seem possible when she considered his weakened condition.

Placing her gifts upon the ledge she left the vault. Before making the descent she hallooed in the hope of receiving an answering hail. There was no response other than the echo flung back from the granite scarp.

The return passage through the velvety terrain was uneventful. She avoided the vicinity of the strange obelisk, and before noon reached the lagoon. Vexation over the failure of her visit, and fear because of the unexplained departure of the apparently ungrateful patient, disturbed her.

Lying upon a sand dune close to the basin, she pensively reviewed the new development.

She admitted that her vexation was unreasonable, but she was piqued by the remem-

brance of her concession in making the second humanely prompted visit to the lair of the mysterious wanderer. She had summoned heavy reserves of courage in the attempt to render succor. Shame and embarrassment had been swept aside so that a good deed might be done. Thus she had gone on her errand of relief. And what of the dénouement? An empty ledge and an absentee patient had constituted her pay in lieu of thanks.

Eventually sense of fairness triumphed. What right to expect the finished courtesy of civilization from a poor wounded wanton of the wild? Was he expected to stay chained by gratitude to a ledge in order to satisfy her caprice? Rather, thank God, that he had found strength to leave his retreat. Nature would offer many balms to heal his hurts.

That there was another who now apparently possessed the freedom of her domain, she clearly realized. She resolved to avoid

the sunken wild. At the time she did not dream of deadlier menaces that might haunt the painted Eden.

Idling with the rustic accessories of her sylvan toilet she waited until the ebb tide had bared the rocky platform under the entrance arch in the buttress. Then she passed through to the naked, unprotected strand and faced the monotonous billows of the Atlantic.

The islet was many miles inside the course of coasting vessels. It lay too close to the treacherous African shore for the comfort or safety of mariners. But surely search would be made.

Brushing away her tears she sought to formulate a code of action. Two things were of the utmost importance. A retreat offering greater security of person must be found, for the vine bower was but a screen; also a signal of distress must be planted upon the buttress and an accurate tally kept of the days of her captivity.

Occupation would be essential to insure mental and spiritual repose.

With dimmed eyes she watched the besieging surf, and when she again passed under the arch, the gravity of her situation pressed heavily.

Along the borders of the sunken vale the birds were at their endless tournaments in the trees. Parrots, patched with yellow, green and red, gravely staged their mimic assaults, advancing their claws and beaks in challenges that failed to provoke. Close to the boulder spring, birds resembling quetzals, golden-green and scarlet, with ringed crests and tail coverts, were in vivacious debate. They fluttered languidly away.

The castaway stooped to drink. Her dimpled knees displaced a fragment of stone that had been wedged in a crack of the rock. She satisfied her thirst and then gave her attention to the thing she had jostled from the crevice. It was a long black spear point, a

dozen inches in length, venomously sharp and resembling an ancient Ethiopian lance-head. There were concave surfaces that formed a haft or grip, and although detached from the long-since decayed hurling shaft, it was a real weapon, a stone stiletto. In a distant age some thirst-driven or savage voyager had deposited it in the crevice, and there it had lain, lost and forgotten.

To the captive it was not only a weapon but a stylet, and she commenced her calendar of calamity by graving four vertical lines upon the boulder.

Through the midday heat she slept. In the afternoon she searched the borders for fruit. There were no orange-trees near the pool, and she would not enter the vale. Wild plums, figs and dates she collected in abundance, and there were vines laden with burgeoning clusters of grapes. This gentle employment released her from the depression of

the morning. Fear faded before the novelty of her surroundings.

She invented tasks, fortifying the sides of the vine arbor with trellises of bamboo shoots. With broken bits of foliage she made a movable lattice to close the entrance. Quantities of silken floss growing along the borders were transported to the retreat and smoothed into the form of a quaint couch. When darkness came she disrobed, and gave herself to rest.

That night she dreamed of the strange creature of the cliff. In the vision it seemed natural to be beside him. They were standing upon the outer beach. Once more they gazed upon each other, and she saw that he was in the full glory of recovered strength. Together they walked along the beach until they neared the chasm. Then her silent associate entered the sea and swam steadily toward the African mainland. He did not return.

In the morning she remembered. Perhaps

the dream was true in so far as it dealt with the departure of the intruder. Nevertheless she now knew that she longed for companionship, if only the friendly nearness of an unlearned forest wilding.

The marooned girl fashioned shapely sandals rigged with grass anklets. Papyrus by the pool furnished material for a tasseled sun-hat with broad and drooping brim. Far more intricate in artistry was the girdle of pliant fiber ornamented with glistening shells. Attached to the girdle was a fiber sheath and in the sheath rested the ancient lance-head.

Near the northern border of the pool there was a low, hollowed rock filled with seepage from the cliff. After the first quarter of the day it formed a perfect mirror. There she saw her own reflection and wondered because it showed no marked change in her countenance. The vivid coloring of her face was somewhat deeper, but there were no strained

lines of anxiety or dismay. The African sun had intensified her beauty.

She had given thought to her chief problems, a secure shelter and a signal for passing ships. As yet the sunken wild had disdained to show a threatening portent, but that was no guarantee as to the innocuousness of the glades. The motionless palms were all too motionless. The area seemed under the sway of an invisible specter. Vague suspicions rose whenever she approached the borders.

From time to time she added bamboo braces and screening shrubs to the sides of the arbor, yet her reliance was not in the strength but the seclusion of her nest.

In the dusk of the sixth day she lingered by the spring. She drank and sprayed the cool water upon her arms. Then she drew the lance-head to mark the interval of time. She struck heavily. The blow drove the stone stiletto against an ore-like substance in the

boulder, a vein of pyrites, and a tiny spark soared upward.

That one spark was enough for revelation. The power and possibilities of fire enraptured her as it had thrilled the brotherhood of the first camp-fire.

Falling upon her knees she voiced her gratitude in prayer. Surely rescue no longer remained a matter of doubt. She straightway set a limit to the time of her captivity.

Fire. A swaying column of flame and smoke pouring upward from the platform of the buttress arch—that would be her signal. She conceived a beacon filled with half the tinder of the islet, an enormous gaseous tongue, which would cry her distress to all the world. In the extravagance of hope she saw herself igniting the grasses of the Sunken Garden and putting the torch to the somnolent palms and bamboos. A new ally was at her beck, ready to transform the islet into

a seething furnace and placard the sea lanes with the story of her bondage.

She rose and rained blows with the lance-head upon the metallic ridges of the curiously composed stone. A shower of incandescent particles streamed from the surface of the boulder.

Tearing a bit of floss from the hem of her kirtle, she repeated the experimental assault upon the rock. The volley of sparks reached the dried tendrils and the floss burst into flames.

It was enough. Here was a confederate worth having. She stamped out the tiny blaze with a sandal.

There was almost absolute certainty in her mind that release was merely a question of days, or a few weeks. It was in her power to gird the islet with beacons that no mariner would ignore. Whatever the reputation of the insular bank, because of the flankings of shoals and

reefs, she knew that she could spur on coastal inquiry and even the investigation of governments by carefully timed conflagrations. An islet of easy aspect suddenly transformed into a fanatical sea candelabrum by night and a suspiciously timed smoke-clock by day, would turn the prow of some passing steamer toward her craggy cell. She was not ignorant of the position of the yacht when it foundered in the tornado, and mapped it mentally as somewhat off the lateral runs of coastal craft. But signals of smoke and flame were visible for great distances and would draw the scrutiny she craved.

Assurance of liberation sweetened her humor and sent her in a mad whirling dance down the sands. Exuberance of vitality swept her onward, and when she ended the barbaric measure and sank breathless upon a miniature sand castle, the essence of a great relief was still with her.

Darkness did not daunt her; she lay for a

long time upon the sand dune, planning her fiery signals. Her noctural companions, the moths, resumed their endless flitting in the dim pastures of the air, but the girl was too absorbed to study their foraging flights. Hitherto she had retired at dusk, but now timidity had stepped aside and she lay in the open, disregarding danger.

When the tropical moon, magnified beyond all belief and astonishingly close, floated above the rim of the barrier, she was roused by the flood of golden splendor poured upon the slumbering basin. It was another blessed augury, and in happy acceptance she passed to her leaf-walled cloister.

Oh, for a cup, filled by a buskined bee
With melted scepters of serenity;
Touched with the odors of the elder-rose,
Brimmed with the drippings of a lost repose.

—*Nathalia Crane*

Chapter VI

THE SEVENTH DAY

THE amorous cries of the birds announced the birth of the seventh day. Winged trespassers alighted upon the trellises and shook the boskage with the vigor of their morning enthusiasms.

With eyes still closed the castaway lolled in sleepy ecstasy upon the lounge of floss, indulging in remembrances of the dancing sparks. She saw salvation in the signal fire, the mighty torch upon the buttress above the lagoon. Day by day a pillar of smoke; night by night a fiery eye. She felt herself upon the threshold of release. In joyful anticipation she tossed her rounded arms above her head.

Her fingers touched a hard, round object!

Rolling swiftly upon her right side she

surveyed the thing. It was a large yellow gourd. It had not been there when she retired.

She rested her chin upon her hands and favored the oddly familiar container with a suspicious stare. At length she reached forth and grasped it. The gourd was full of fragrant wild honey.

Her startled eyes swept the interior of the arbor with one embracing glance.

There was another surprise. In a corner, near the lattice that barred the entrance, rose a perfect pyramid of oranges, the luscious globes she had not dared to seek in the Sunken Garden.

The lattice was still in position and secured by vines.

Who was the invader?

Donning her kirtle, she forced the lacings of the lattice and ran to the verge of the lagoon. Her eyes searched the borders of the vale, the circumscribing sands of the

basin, and the sun-seared crags. No affrighting presence was revealed. Suddenly she straightened and broke into trilling laughter. It was the laughter of pleased assurance.

Returning to her arbor she attentively examined the interior. There was no disarrangement of the trellised sides. As far as she could discern not a leaf had been thrust from place.

She sank upon the crude lounge and raised the yellow gourd to her knees. It was one of the three gourds she had carried to the sufferer on the cliff. And thus, honey-laden, it had been surreptitiously returned.

Dipping her fingers in, she sucked the distilled tropical blooms.

While sipping the nectar she turned to scrutinize the pile of fruit. A slow smile parted her red lips as she studied the outline of the miniature Cheops. The base was a square of sixty ripe globes. The consecutive tiers were reduced layers of oranges, and the

apex was a single odd-looking object that she did not at first identify.

The castaway must have been familiar with the stories of the Egyptian wonders. She recalled the question of placement, and observed that in the replica there was the same orientation. The faces of the pyramid of oranges were to the north, the east, the south and the west. None but a skillful artificer would have thought of that.

And only a bashful youth with an agile brain would have so tendered his gifts of fruit and honey.

Who was the donor?

The girl knew.

In a reverie she ate the fruit and sipped the honey.

It was plain that the sufferer of the cliff had rallied and was roaming the islet.

Vainly she fenced with queries as to the invasion of her nest.

Was it unbridled audacity, or rather the

execution of a carefully devised plan to relieve her anxiety and give silent assurance of the presence of a powerful and gentle companion?

Still ruminating, her gaze fell full upon the object capping the pyramidal pile, which was filling her stem-coupled cabin with the fragrance of bergamot.

It was a little cup made for a child's lips, and it was of a mellow metal that flouted the colors of the citrus. The girl seized it and turned the shining thing in her hands. It was chased after the manner of goldsmiths of a bygone time, and instantly she knew that she was holding one of the old heirlooms of a citadel of the north. She also knew for a certainty that this cup was the supposed bauble she had last seen suspended from the neck of the young pagan.

There were two handles formed of cupids bending from the bowl and attached to the periphery by wings and soles. The rim was

carved with flowered designs. The delicate base was shaped like that of a sacred chalice and covered with cabalistic marks. But the most startling characteristic of the cup was the name deeply graved below the rim, in letters so cunningly spaced that they circled the priceless drinking vessel. One by one she deciphered the thick Roman strokes, spelling as in a class-room, and the total made the name Godfrey. There was a date on the belly-curve of the chalice, and the numbers were still legible. The date was the year 1096.

The girl gasped and closed her hands over the cup to smother her excitement. In her own land even the children of the lower forms were familiar with the name and the year. Godfrey? There was but one Godfrey in all history, the eleventh-century soldier, Godfrey, duke of Lower Lorraine, leader of the First Crusade.

How then had this keepsake of a noble

family, this altruistic souvenir of fortitude and faith, stumbled into the clutch of a youth rankless as a herd boy? Here was the cup of a princeling, the handiwork of some once celebrated artificer in metals, sliding down the balustrades of the past from the level of the eleventh century, and landing upon a pile of oranges grown in the twentieth century. It was not conceivable, unless the cup was part of the loot of buccaneers long buried and finally dug up by a prying forest urchin.

She was familiar with the stories of the Crusades, and in turning over the legends of that idealistic period she recalled the marvelous pageant of the children, the most elaborate of earthly sacrifices, a hundred thousand babblers just beyond the swaddling band marching to death in glory.

She passed in review the companies of infants trooping from the towns and vineyards to take part in the tragic debacle, leaving

parents and home with scarcely a backward glance.

The histories had always briefed the tale, but she managed to assemble fragments of stories told by ancestral firesides. These glorified babes of the Children's Crusade had gone forth to vindicate a dream. They believed that they were divinely detailed to save the Holy Land. No human power could restrain them. If detained, they sickened and died in their homes. In their marching columns were many of noble family, sons and daughters of those who had fought the Moslems, and who inherited the spirit of the age.

While she twisted the cup between her fingers, the strands of a theory as to its reappearance were inevitably drawn together. Nearly everyone knew that the survivors of the Children's Crusade, at least whole shiploads, were sold as slaves in North African ports and lived to serve the needs of alien breeds. Few among them but treasured some

keepsake or parting gift of father, mother, friend. Such tokens of love and devotion would be guarded as the last links of happiness. There were chains, rings, crosses, and perchance a child's gold drinking-cup.

Of that first owner she thought deeply. Many a damsel had gone on the Crusade garbed as a boy, in order to make certain of a place in the ranks. It was more likely that a girl would have clung to the cup to the last. And the linking hands of generations had passed it along the files of the chosen guardians. Its freedom from dent and warp testified to the fidelity of the custodians.

But the North African coast-line was a long way from the Equator.

The point was pondered and rebuked by the equally evident truth that the twentieth century was as markedly removed from the thirteenth century.

Boy or girl, the first conveyancer of the chalice must have been singularly adroit. To

elude the vigilance of a slave market, to conceal a worshiped keepsake for days, months, possibly years, while serving a greedy and merciless Mohammedan master or mistress, called not only for a deviceful mind, but for ancestral strains of unalterable courage and faith.

The castaway fancied that she held the mental picture of the first cup-bearer, the mystical one who had baffled the bearded Alexandrian slave traffickers. She conjured a brown-eyed daughter of France clad in the ragged finery of a page; a maid bred in a castle, formed for the lovely ceremonies of life, but standing in an Egyptian slave market, with a tiny golden cup concealed in the artfully ruffled hair. So plainly was the picture flashed that she viewed not only the noble captive but the faces of the brutal barterers. The microscopic slides of dusty years were tucked under the magnifying glass, and she glimpsed within the measure of a mo-

ment the concluding movements of the Crusade of the Children.

As the glass dimmed, her mind concentrated upon the central figure, the daughter of France, posed as a chattel under an Alexandrian awning. Their eyes met; out of the abyss of time darted a discerning and comprehending glance. The damsel of the Egyptian market-place was signaling down the centuries, and to whom else but the castaway? With a vividness indescribable, she, the island refugee, saw that other refugee, the disguised damsel of the Crusade, raise her hand with index finger pointed upward as if in warning. She caught a fleeting nod and smile; then the vision vanished. The end came quickly like the closing of the covers upon a rare old daguerreotype.

Those brown orbs of the Crusader—she had seen them before, and in almost the identical facial setting. The eyes of the Crusading page were the exact counterparts of

those of the young pagan of the cliff. Drawing upon the radiations of her daydream she traced other resemblances in the personage of the ledge back to that remote ancestress standing so nonchalantly under the yellow awning of an ancient city of the Nile.

Catching up a braiding of grass she strung the cup upon the loop and adjusted the talisman as a necklace.

By degrees she was becoming reconciled to the odd recession from all conceptions of the present. The impression of her recent vision illumined her surroundings and added an unexpected tang to life. For the first time adventure became a matter of pleasurable interest, and she forgot her recent enthusiasm over the fire beacons.

After her morning plunge in the lagoon she tested the wild honey in the gourd and added an orange to her usual fare of plan-

The islet was now a dual principality. Of tains.

that she was positive. Judgment called for a truce and a division of domain.

Intuition and the plastic philosophy of girlhood led her to a satisfactory solution of the new problems.

It would be unreasonable to frown upon so modest a proffer of friendship, or rebuke a humble rover of the wilds because of the method and the time. Upon her bosom there swayed the golden cup, the one gift within reach of this barbarian, a priceless and historic token.

In any event innocent intimacy was preferable to unacknowledged proximity.

Sauntering to the water mirror, she arranged her glinting tresses and fastened the coil with the double thorns of the cactus. The mirror gave a faithful reflection. There were the starry gray eyes, heavily fringed, the delicately bridged Grecian nose, and the alluring lips. As the girl gazed at herself she

felt the fullness and wonder of life. The impulses of the tropics, the zest for existence entered her blood and stained her cheeks.

In her capricious state there was no presentiment of danger. In any event she was not unarmed, for the stone stiletto nestled in its sheath at her girdle. Slowly she adjusted her tasseled sun hat and fearlessly entered the Sunken Garden.

She chanced first upon a spacious natural avenue of cocoanut-palms. Scores of the tan-colored nuts were strewn upon the ground. She placed several of the fibered rinds in the curve of her left arm and strayed deeper into the wilds. Reaching a lakelet of pure water, she paused to pierce the nuts with the stiletto. There she rested to drink the milk and study the branchless stems of the palms rising sixty and ninety feet in height and topped with feather-shaped leaves eighteen to twenty feet long.

The lake was shallow, barely of knee

depth, and less than twenty feet wide. Beyond, a narrow grassless defile darkened by denser growths showed dimly like some cobwebbed corridor.

The lovely explorer forded the lakelet, and loitered along the natural runway of the defile.

But there came a moment when she stopped and uttered a strangled cry. Terror struck all power of motion from her limbs. She was face to face with the stark specter of the vale.

Down the defile, a mottled horror, a ghost leopard, couchant, was glaring with blood-lusting eyes. At last the dim imaginings were realized. The sunken vale was disclosing its real dreadfulness.

The feline, tigerish in dimensions, crouched in the center of the runway. Sure of its prey, the beast scorned all cover. Its head, flat-browed as a sand viper's, was lowered between the protruding shoulders. The

writhing under-jaw touched the ground. Muscular ripplings of the ringed flanks alone betrayed the celerity of the stealthy forward progress.

The girl was bound by terror. She could not move. But she could voice her agony. She screamed until the vale echoed. Her cries brought answering shrieks from the plumed denizens of the tree channels.

The sounds neither hastened nor delayed the practised approach of the ghost leopard. The basilican stare of the great brute, the furtive, forward-shifting of the expanded pads were part of its hypnotic program. The beast bulked as the distance lessened, and the shuddering muscles presaged the spring.

At that instant the tall reeds to the left of the girl were brushed aside. A tense form stole swiftly and silently into the grassless glade. The refugee was drawn backward—a human hand plucked the stone knife from

her girdle. This interruption shattered the spell of the beast, and the castaway's mind was liberated. She swayed and fell upon her knees, the one spectator in the narrow arena.

Interposed between the ghost leopard and its intended prey was the atavism of the cliff, the wastrel, the supposed troglodyte.

No. It was not true. Her heart cried out, and her thoughts rebuked the maze of confused doubts. Her champion was not a creature of the woods; he was the Crusader of her dream. He was armed, and he would defend her.

But the cliff athlete was more intent upon attack than defense. With poised lance-head he was gliding upon the feline.

To the leopard the unmasking of this upright fanged phantom was surprising and disturbing. Here was one who waved aside the festival of ferocity. It was disconcerting and distracting.

The distraction caused fatal hesitation on

the part of the leopard in the launching of its body. The delay had destroyed the brute's technique of attack. There was now no space to develop the momentum necessary for a rush or leap. The factors of weight and shock were lost.

The balked beast, driven to its final resource, reared on its hind quarters to a height of six feet. Thus balanced it straddled forward to close with tusk and claw. But the forest athlete also lunged forward. The hot gaping jaws and snarling lips were within a few inches of his face when the stone knife, extended high above his head, shot downward in an arc. The velocity, precision and force sent the stone shaft through the feline's skull.

The great cat toppled backwards and sprawled upon the ground in the convulsions of death. Twice it regained its feet and leaped into the air only to fall in twitching rigors. In the death struggle it clawed vi-

ciously at its head and made the glade hideous with screams.

The fright-fettered castaway had watched the struggle with the abstraction of despair.

The slaughter of the leopard extricated her from one phase of the morning's escapade, but now she was hemmed by another stunning dilemma.

Through her uncounseled quest in the Sunken Garden she had sprung the pitfalls of the unforeseen. She had placed herself in the power of the resuscitated monad of the cliff. The chiding tears welled in her eyes as she crouched on the ground. She uttered a forlorn little wail and covered her face with her hands, and drew her limbs under the fringe of her kirtle.

Her defender spoke no word, yet she knew he was bending over her. Suffering the tortures of uncertainty and fear she felt a wave of terror when the hand of her deliverer swept her hair. But there was a sudden ac-

cess of utter shame and helplessness when wonderfully strong arms enveloped her and lifted her from the soil.

She did not rebel. It seemed inevitable. Her head rested against the breast of the leopard slayer. She was helpless, and the distracted mind sank into that trance-like state wherein realities are as unsubstantial as dreams.

Inert she remained in the supporting clasp. In faint flashes of consciousness she fancied she was being borne through shadowy aisles and into the exotic depths of the sunken vale. Together they were drifting down darkened vistas, heavy with silence and intoxicating perfumes.

For her there was no conception as to the length of the journey. So much of danger, woe and loneliness had befallen her that she had little strength to dispute the dictates of fate.

In the secretive twilight of an embowered

dell she was deposited upon a velvety bed of flowers.

Reviving consciousness called for flight, and she straightway began to plan a dignified departure. Half lying on the blossoming couch, and with closed eyes, she was on the point of making one desperate effort at escape when the tumbled draperies of her hair were drawn aside, and she found herself once more gazing into the luminous eyes of her rescuer.

In confusion and shame she allowed her hands to be drawn into the clasp of her captor. Strange words, tender in tone, and all in an unknown language, calmed her, and finally she found courage to gaze at her companion.

In the darkened sconce there was nothing awe-inspiring in his appearance. But the absence of conventionality sent the blood to her cheeks. Her companion was little more than a youth, and the brown eyes were full of adoration.

There, in an island tazza paved with green,
Nestled a topaz and a tourmaline.

—*Nathalia Crane*

Chapter VII

TOPAZ AND TOURMALINE

Now were the very gods at the keyholes. A new Pyramus and Thisbe were facing each other, sitting but a pace apart in the heart of the tawny tazza.

It was as if two brilliant jewels had been dropped into the crown settings of a ring, a topaz and a tourmaline. The girl was the topaz, the boy was the tourmaline.

To both it seemed as if the world were swaying beneath them; there was a distinct drumming in their ears. They acted as if each were oblivious of the other's presence, and feigned a childish abstraction.

In their conceptions of the necessities of life and the scope of human employments they were as far apart as heaven and earth; but now they acted alike—like two tavern

youngsters encountering each other for the first time on an empty highway, uncertain whether to pass or to greet. All that had gone before was inconsequential. The ordeal with the beast was over. What startled them now was themselves.

The Topaz idly fell to fingering the golden cup suspended from her throat, and at length ventured surreptitious and cautiously timed glances from under her fringed lids. Embarrassment still held the wilding's eyes to a survey of the flower-studded floor of the rustic booth.

The Topaz spoke first, no longer able to ignore the presence of her boyish saviour. She broke into a tremulous murmur of gratitude, and from the vibrations of her own speech she drew a more complete understanding of the unhesitating courage of her escort.

Stories of the hunt were the relaxation of the fireside in her own environment; she had heard enough of trail and lairage to know

that the conquest of the ghost leopard was either a blundering stroke of stupendous luck, or the result of the consummate skill of a daring and peerless hunter. Of her own nationality there were hundreds of skillful handlers of weapons, with numberless trophies to back their prowess, but never a one had so stolen a march upon an advancing avalanche of tooth and talon; never a one had made such an unerring placement of steel, to say nothing of stone knives.

These thoughts ran as an undercurrent of her words, and in the middle of her outpouring an odd phase of the encounter picked at her brain. How did the young pagan know that there was a weapon at hand when he slipped unarmed from the defile's edge? She stopped and stared.

The Tourmaline had remained as one transfixed, intent only on catching the strains of some bewitching melody, the cadences of the girl's voice. Now he gazed again into

her eyes, into the gray discs charged with the fire of earnestness. The wide, fixed stare shook him from a somber reserve born of neglect and danger. He half turned toward her, smiled and extended the lance-head that had played such a momentous part within the hour.

The Topaz took the weapon and restored it to its sheath. Now that she had drawn the gaze of her rescuer for the second time, she saw that the full face of the youth was the likeness of the *familiar*, the apparition that had risen from the golden cup. Here was an absolute reincarnation sitting beside her on the earthy divan. The countenance of the youth was the countenance of the girl Crusader of the morning vision. Out of the winding sheets of distance and time had stepped the damsel of the Egyptian hutteries, but in the guise of a male.

Here was heredity with a vengeance, or a gift, the product of ancestry, linked to a com-

pelling personality of the past; a personality so laden with grace and goodness that it had projected itself down a millennium with the ease of a falling asteroid.

The Tourmaline sat gravely erect. He, too, was speculating upon the cause of this new excitement.

The silence was broken again.

"Yes," said the Topaz, keeping her unflinching eyes level with those of the enigma "your hair was always dark, much darker than mine. But the sun made it different, even as it does in the northern countries under constant exposure."

The grave one inclined his head as if in admission, and then, to the amazement of the castaway, raised his right hand in the exact gesture of his counterpart, the vision maid of the Egyptian market-place.

Then he spoke.

Words, rusty with disuse, but softly uttered. And one intelligible sound stood

forth with a clearness that belied any possibility of mistake. The youth mentioned the name upon the graven cup. With that name he had snapped the last link into the chain of apparently irrefutable evidence, an entail of testimony that unmasked the purposeful liaison of ages.

Was the whole fabric of her theory a tricky hallucination, one of those vague mythical conceptions of the human mind which lie quiescent for countless periods like a pearl being reglossed in the depths and carefully tinted for another ballroom run? She looked at her prodigy of the primeval and renounced the sophistry.

Hallucination or fancy, there sat the boy, the immutable fact, and the vision, at least as it related to the sudden and impulsive gesture of the youth, was hours in advance of the reality.

Feeling new confidence in the sway of her own personality, the Topaz lifted the grass-

strung cup from her breast and extended it in her palm. The Tourmaline, still smiling, touched it lightly, pointed to the northward, and with the movement gave a stately accounting of the source and pilgrimage of the vessel.

"And you also," she cried, intent upon gathering the last atom of testimony. In the intensity of her curiosity she laid her fingers upon the burnished shoulder of the Tourmaline.

The youth touched his brow and again pointed northward. From the intonation he had instantly guessed the substance of her question.

The Topaz cast her nets downward through the weedy riffraff of the ages until her perspective narrowed to a single group, that of a girlish ancestress and a chosen coterie of escaping Children of the Crusade. Her momentary quest was like shaking a residue of seeds from the burlap of antiquity.

Out they tumbled, a stream of revelations. These juvenile slaves from the north had done what slaves of all time have attempted. They had stolen by night to the Nile and seized a saic. After that, they had floated southward and vanished beyond the cataracts.

When she sought by sign language for a confirmation of this possible epic, the Tourmaline exhibited a distressing obstinacy. She again drew his attention to the cup, but his answering signal was invariably a triple gesture, a sweeping of the arm to the northward, to the westward, and finally to the southward.

If it was true that this youth was the last surviving heir to the glory and sufferings of the Children of the Crusade, why did he trace an airy map that led directly opposite to the placement of her vision?

They drew together in their excitement. They were like two children seeking to con-

sole each other because they could not arrive swiftly at the same conclusion.

At last their vain gropings after a lost identity were quieted in the benediction of the present, and they surrendered the task of trying to reconcile a series of fantastic differences.

The languor of the late afternoon stole unperceived in the sconce and performed wand-waving wizardry.

The lack of a common language did not interpose a wall. They reclined upon the blossoming mound of the sconce, listening in turn to new languages and seeking to catch familiar inflections. The wood waif, the dual personality so veiled in seriousness and submission, used a tongue that often lapsed from scantiness of verbal expression, but there were soft labials that often approached the English and French derivations of certain archaic words.

A dulcet dimness gradually melted the

harlequin patterns of the embrasure. Often their hands met in spontaneous faith and in the unvoiced hopes of their new intimacy. Once the surprising pagan chanted a string of words that could have been nothing more to him than the meaningless jingle of a forest nursery.

The girl coerced him into a repetition of the list. He smilingly complied but did not seem conscious of the meaning of the exercise. He was simply seeking to please by stringing the beads of a carefully curtained infancy. Nevertheless the words came trooping across the obstructions of misplaced accents and in the tattered uniforms of a language openly guidoned. It was the classroom—a French primer—the roll of the French equivalents for Monday, Tuesday and Thursday.

The shadows deepened, but the boy and the girl still tarried in the tazza. To the Topaz and the Tourmaline yesterday and to-

morrow had lost all contour and color. There was a subsidence of the rough edges of actuality. The very purlieus of the storm memories had rolled into obscurity, and the encounter with the ghost leopard had slipped down the declines of vacuity.

They were left to the simplicities and leisure of a suddenly created companionship.

Too soon the girl realized that darkness was close upon them. She rose and laughed when the thought of the comfort of bobbed hair darted into her mind. Young life was reacting with all the potency of its eternal magic.

When the Topaz pointed southward and imperiously signaled her desire to return to her sanctuary near the lagoon, the Tourmaline swept aside the flowery tapestries of the tazza, and together they stepped from the poppy-perfumed recess. She no longer felt like a sea fugitive, one who had been subjected to a cataclysm and hurled upon a des-

ert isle to face a miserable and lonely existence. She was a different damsel, alive to hope and the heritage of courage.

The Topaz stepped into a screened pathway and advanced a short distance. Realizing that she was unaccompanied she turned and saw the young pagan still standing on the threshold of the sconce. Here was delicacy. He was offering her the freedom of the isle, uncluttered by the intrusion of his own presence.

The Topaz called softly; the enigma did not move. She ran back and with a persuasive motion outlined the supposed position of the buttress arch. The youth remained silent and motionless. With a proud boldness that permitted of no dispute or dalliance, she slipped her fingers into the palm of his hand and drew him forward. In another moment they were treading the obscure valley trail together. Down through cottonwood corri-

dors they passed and into the torrid center of the Sunken Garden.

Through unrecognized belvederes and past flower-jacketed pergolas they sauntered hand in hand. Her companion avoided the defile where the dead ghost leopard lay. He led her over a more enticing route, and at a rock fountain stooped to serve her with water caught in the cone of a twisted leaf. There they halted for a quarter of an hour, and there she rested and tasted of the offerings he brought her, pomegranates, grapes and plums.

It was evident that to this creature of the cliff the girl was some supernatural embodiment of the beautiful, unexplainable as the azure of the sky or the loveliness of the orchids at their feet. Her presence invoked a spiritual servitude, a restless desire to propitiate and please. He marked her predilections and made brief excursions in search of

tempting fruits. He proved a master of divination.

The sun had dipped below the barrier and the dusk was settling swiftly when they came to the open avenue of palms. The moon was already above the line of bastions when they entered the precincts of the silver basin, which extended a homely, if silent welcome.

For a while they lolled in company upon a sand dune, listening to the lapping of the tidal flow under the arch, and watching the gambols of the moths. Their only chaperon was the yellowing cliff, but grimmer than any wrinkled empress of old. And yet on this night the pitted profile wore a more lenient and abstracted air, as one content to fumble at the threads of an old fantasy and leave a budding romance to manage its own affairs.

When the girl and youth separated, it was with the understanding that the pagan was to stay within the borders of the lagoon. Not until she had assured herself of this by signs

and reiterated commands did the castaway withdraw to her tiny cloister.

In obedience to the mistress of the isle, the enigma sought a couch among the ferns of the margin.

The night was without incident or alarm. If the Sunken Garden harbored the mate of the slain ghost leopard, no indications were given, and the animosity of the place was again buried under the calm of its beguiling visage.

The moon at the full flooded the flooring of sand and changed the lagoon into a saffron transparency that showed the mirage of a constellation flattened to the surface of the water. A faint wind stirred the palms and wafted the tepid vapors of the inner wild seaward. Peace and silence held the twin scepters of the tropical night.

There is a weird for every empty shell,
A hant resides where once the orchid fell;
And in collapsing chancels of the mole,
A shambling ghost still plays his eyeless rôle.

—*Nathalia Crane*

Chapter VIII

EXPERIMENTS

By sunrise the new retainer of the chatelaine of the glamorous isle was abroad in search of luxuries.

When the castaway issued from her lattice, she was composed and thoughtful despite the racing events of the previous day. Unmolested she bathed and completed her toilet at the water mirror. If there was a trace of resignation in her languid movements, it was not attributable to any keen distress, but rather to the natural reactions resulting from the extravagant surprises of a nerve-racking yesterday.

The pagan was not as yet within the limits of the lagoon, but she felt sure that he could not be far away and would certainly return.

The zest she betrayed in watching the

morning activities of the birds along the border attested to the reconciliation of her thoughts.

Straying from a passage of the shrubbery her young knight of the defile presently appeared, bearing a rudely constructed basket of twined fronds. It was loaded with pulps, blazoned to ripeness and fresh from recent plucking. Many of the fruits were unknown to her, and there were sugary loaves of some highly spiced substance that far outranked the plantains as a substitute for bread. There was also a calabash full of the pungent new wine of the pomegranate produced from some hidden cupboard of the interior.

Together they laid their repast in the shadows of a cluster of towering bamboos. For goblets there were the gourds.

With such daintiness as was possible the morning meal was spread, and then, to her dismay, the cliff boy knelt and began to serve her as if she were a princess upon her own

domain and not a castaway confined to an insular province.

She could not submit to a service that was an indignity to her rescuer, and so she gestured him to a place beside her, and by her own offerings so confused him that he soon quieted into attention to his own needs.

Contentment drew closer to the two marooned victims of mischance.

There was the first lesson in English. That was inevitable, for in the heart of every maid dwells a disposition to usurp the rôle of teacher.

It was easy to begin.

"Boy—girl—lagoon," said the instructress.

"Boy — girl — lagoon," repeated the monad.

For an hour there was intensive instruction; then the interrogations and responses lapsed into utterances that had little to do with the mere formalities of speech or script.

Parrots and other winged adventurers fluttered down and helped themselves to the fruit, or dipped their beaks into the calabash of wine. Their familiarity and fearlessness told of the long-continued barbarity of the surroundings, but in her new-found companionship the castaway did not heed the information so openly conveyed. She was still certain that rescue from the island was simply a postponed incident and could be gauged to within a few days. In the meantime she had so far forgotten the externals beyond the buttress breach that she caught up a gourd and began to teach her companion the game of pitch and toss.

In the midst of this engaging and exhilarating pastime and while the striped ball was flying through the air, she was suddenly brought back to a sense of the real extremities of her case.

The knife that had saved them from the leopard lay on the turf at their feet. The

castaway, already half forgetful of the future, saw that it was time to test its fire-making possibilities. She felt she must assume the burdens of judgment and foresight.

Drawing her companion to the sands of the lagoon, she sent him in quest of dried brushwood. She purposed starting a fire upon the inner beach, and as there were masses of forest debris along the margin of the wild, the task was an easy one.

To each armful of fagots she added bundles of dried grass. When the pile was high enough she recalled her eager helper with a low cry of exultation.

Plucking a pebble from the strand she struck it sharply with the lance-head, but the flint weapon failed her. After repeated trials she dropped the pebble. There was the boulder spring. Twisting grasses into the form of a torch she ran to the rock.

She struck downward upon the vein of magnetic ore. Tiny stars darted forth.

Pressing the torch close to the rock to catch the full volley of sparks, she raised her arm high above her head and plunged the flint lance-head against the vein. A stream of fiery particles poured upon the tinder and ignited the grass.

Waving the flambeau she ran to the beach and thrust it into the pile of fagots. Smoke and flames poured forth.

In her excitement she danced around the bonfire.

Her astonished ally would have walked into the flames had she not laid detaining hands upon him.

Together they watched the ascending smoke as it belched upward into the turquoise vault. It was indeed a signal and one that few sailors would ignore along that desolate coast-line.

But as she watched the black gases, the girl was stabbed with a sense of shame. The signal was one thing that her companion could

not understand, and in her absolute loyalty she felt she was violating a confidence.

Her dreams were no longer of rescuing boats.

When the gases ceased to curl upward and the fire flamed evenly she was oddly conscious of a renewal of contentment.

But fire could do more than beckon boats; food could be cooked.

She urged her partner to the archway opening upon the ocean. There they searched the uncovered ledges and trapped tide-locked fish in the crannies. When they deserted the archway before the incoming tide, the youth bore their catch of fish and a quantity of oysters torn from the water shelves of the channel.

The fire still smoldered. They added fuel and tossed scores of stones into the flames to hold the heat and form an open hearth.

The oysters, unopened, were thrown upon the stones, and the prepared fish were trans-

ferred to the hearth with improvised tongs of wood.

Under the mangroves they made their preparations for serving the midday meal. Plantain leaves were used for plates and napery. The wine, the honey and the fruit were placed within easy reach. It was a banquet free from the disparaging remembrances of silver and linen.

The meal was an experiment. The castaway surmised that her worshiper had never eaten cooked food. For that reason she watched the roasting process with anxiety. She was eager for a fair test. Finally the stimulating odors gave her encouragement. With the tongs she raised the well-browned fish and placed them upon the leaves. There was no disappointment, for when she tasted there was the tang of an agreeable flavor. The roasted oysters were poked from the embers and the meal was spread.

If the lord of the manor met her wishes

and ate the cooked food, she would be satisfied. No saturnine doubt could assail her as to his amenability to all social and civilized formalities. She ate of the viands and then held tempting morsels to his lips. At first he ate to please, but soon he was as vitally interested as herself in the new dishes.

An awakened taste gave zest. His approval of the savory shellfish moved her to smiles. She served daintily and gloried in the success of her experiment.

Afterward they dipped figs in the honey and drank the mellow juice of the pomegranate.

Pleased with her own analysis of possible progress the castaway, while feasting, sought to view her comrade judicially. She was sure that her advocacy was powerful enough to control a destiny so plainly placed at her disposal.

Wherein, she asked herself, had he fallen from the standards of vaunted civilization?

"In no degree," responded the special counsel she had carefully provided.

Could there be reinstatement and repayment for the wanderings and sufferings of years? "Even so," replied the picked attorney from the courtroom in the corner of her brain.

After their first meeting he had effaced himself until the night of the secret gifts. In the wild he had not appeared until the leopard marked her for prey.

Thereafter?

Suddenly she withdrew her appeal to the judgment places of the mind; she was not a neutral and uninterested auditor at the suppositious trial.

The remnants of the feast were thrown into the embers, and they laved at the boulder runlet.

In the afternoon the intense heat drove them to the cooler solitudes of the Sunken Garden.

Instinctively she knew that their steps were tending toward some particular point of interest known to the youth, and surmised that her guide was not so unfamiliar with the islet as she had first supposed. Brooding upon the matter, she perceived that he might have made visits other than the enforced one dictated by the tornado.

Her faith in the masterfulness of the young hunter was so great that she felt no trepidation in entering the scented inclosure. Leaving one of the lunettes they came into a color-daubed oval, and before them rose the pinnacle rock, ribboning its fairy cascade of green. The great needle in spots was as white as Parian marble, in other places stained to a dull sienna.

The youth approached the western façade of the obelisk and ripped away a loose layer of moss from the rock at about the height of a child's reach. Beckoning to the girl he showed her the marks of a chisel, or other

edged tool, which had bitten into the stone. There were letters, strings of them, running crossways and vertically.

The sorcerer of this frontier of fate was again at work. The lifting of a film of fungus—the sliding of a secret panel—had laid bare a roll-call chipped in the flank of the perpendicular sluice-way and pitiful enough to break the heart.

There were the letters, in jumbled straggling lines, the names of stormy-souled juveniles of France, names of the sons and daughters of the oldest and noblest families of Europe.

At the top was the name of Adelis, heiress to the castles of Godfrey of Bouillon, and beneath, in childish chiseling, the cognomens and surnames of a Foulcher of Chartres, a Bohemond, a Guiscard, and a Thebaut. Below were other appellations that had carried the weight of the battle-ax and breastplate.

The little hands that had made these indentations with mallet and spike must have striven to the uttermost with the adamantine surface.

After their names trooped the numerals of their days on earth. Adelis of Bouillon, fourteen years; and fourteen for a Thebaut and a Marie of the Bohemonds; twelve for a Guiscard, and ten for a Foulcher. Interspersed between the titled fledglings were the names of peasant boys and the less stately nomens of the daughters of the sabot and the inn.

It was all done in the ragged lettering of one or two small scriveners, who had somehow stepped beyond dullness and had learned to scrawl in the glyphs of their period; but there was a plainness and certainty of execution.

There were a score of names in all, and well below the last was the one word "De-

cembre" and the Roman numerals for the year 1212.

The youth must have known for a long time that the memorial was there, but to the latest observer it was as if a mummy had shaken its swathings and stepped from a sarcophagus. She rubbed her eyes in astonishment and awe. The first glance at the inscriptions made her oblivious of the presence of her associate.

All that she had ever read or heard of the Crusade of the Children commenced to sweep through her mind.

Yes, she recalled the very month of the embarkation of the immaculates of the French column. It was in August, 1212, that the infantile contingents sailed from the port of Marseilles. Here, upon an African islet, was the certified record that some had survived the rigors of the sea and had succeeded in landing upon the oval. They had

drifted through the hooded causeway in the buttress, even as she had done.

Her companion had pictured a western and southern course for these same strayers from the apron-strings of home and love, but she had not heeded it at the time, because it confounded her ideas as to the story and route of the graven cup. Now she caught the full significance of his gestures, but at the same time she blamed herself for the slackness of her memory in visualizing the greatest of all child catastrophes.

The names of those on the mortuary rock represented some one group that had escaped the great betrayal into the hands of the Mohammedans. The evidence of their one-time occupancy of the Sunken Garden showed that they had evaded the venomous snares of false shipowners and had by sheer luck, or the guidance of Heaven, drifted beyond the ken of the marauders of the Mediterranean.

In her intense craving for a solution the

girl sank upon her knees before the tablet and again devoured the list of saintly names. What could have become of this tiny battalion of babes, tumbled into a marine crater a mile off the dense continental wilderness? Had they floated peacefully into proximity with the oval, or had they been hurled on wreckage through the masked passageway? That they had camped close to the lat or water pinnacle was clear from their masonic activities.

In the eagerness of the investigation she pursued the burning theme. If they had become reconciled to life in the tazza, the bowl of the isle, then it was possible that they had lived out their lives in its confines. That supposition would be justification for the belief that there were other traces of their tenancy in various localities of the circular terrain. Some signs of their daily routine must be left, and it was not a great stretch of the imagination to suspect that their last resting-places were somewhere in the vicinity.

Tears filled the gazer's eyes as she dwelt upon the last of the little wanderers and pictured the final survivor dying, alone, and with no chance of interment.

The periodical storms and the rank fecundity of the island must have swept away or buried under vegetable layers such landmarks as huts and camping sites. But these children, in one instance, had matched their strategy against time and had succeeded in pinning an ineffaceable scroll upon the streaked onyx and marble of a hybrid obelisk. They had laid aside the precedents and mixed the names of peers and peasants, and only children would have done that thing in the year 1212.

The girl, still scanning the names, felt she was being drawn to the heart of the great tragedy. Again she essayed to classify the proofs thrust upon her.

There was the boy, the last of the cup-

bearers, evidently of princely blood, but strictly bound by unlearned years; there was her vision of the slave of the Nile water-front, and lastly there were the holy names upon the pinnacle lat. One of the galleasses of the Children of the Crusade was certainly responsible for a landing party on the islet.

The pinnacle marked, in irrefutable manner, an arrival, but gave no hint of a departure. Supposing it was just as it appeared to be, that one galleass had strayed through the Straits of Gibraltar and after a three months' cruise had rounded-to off the ridged oval. After the torment of the voyage the islet must have seemed a sublime haven. Sickness must have eaten their hearts and sapped their courage on that long flight southward. More than one little body must have been committed to the seas.

Two or three hundred children must have been sardined into the hulks that sailed from Marseilles on that blue-sky morning of the

long ago. The stone lat gave the names of but twenty survivors from the one galleass picked by the gods for the five-thousand-mile wandering down the Atlantic wastes; truly, a cargo of babes sent forth to traffic with the tempests and treacherous calms that haunted the calamitous coast.

The girl saw them stretching their shrunken bodies on the parched decks, moaning for water and food, in the throes of physical seizures. She mentally photographed their attempted landings and the constant fear of beasts and savages that daunted and drove them back to the lazarous decks of the galleass. Gone was the spiritual exaltation that had sent them singing to the wharves of old Marseilles even as the German children had chanted in the passage of the Alps and at the gates of Genoa and Pisa.

During her absorption the monad had remained aloof as if in reverence of her mood. She now turned to him, seeking further di-

rection of her thoughts. To indicate her desires she touched the sculptured list.

With mystical insight he laid a finger on the top line of the memorial, the name of Adelis, descendant of Godfrey of Lower Lorraine, then pointed to himself and raised his finger to the sky—a symbolical portrayal of some trinity, the meaning of which was but faintly grasped by the boy himself.

If she could have expunged from her memory the vision of the maid under the Alexandrian awning, a plausible solution of the present riddle of the monad was at hand. The name Adelis evidently figured in his mind as that of his mother.

If the Crusading waifs from the reeking galleass had really negotiated the western seas and had landed upon the islet, there followed the assumption that they grew into adults, who preserved remembrances of the rites and ceremonies of civilized communi-

ties and shaped their lives upon the patterns of their native villages and palatines.

She thought of love and cast down her eyes. Perchance a priest had been among them, one whose invocation for safety had been answered. He could have given in marriage.

Once more she stared at the name that headed the uncanny roll-call, the name of Adelis of the courtyards of Lorraine; impelled by a sudden surge, her thoughts marched down a long line of unquailing island grand dames, matrons and brides until she came, at the end, to a French damsel perched composedly upon a moss-battened boulder not a dozen feet away.

There sat the apparition, swinging a foot and wearing the same inscrutable smile that had marked the countenance of the girl of the Alexandrian awning. Fact and actuality were again turned topsyturvy. It was no

mere hallucination; the senses of the cast-away were alert and intensified.

There sat the French damsel, clad in a broidered frock of the thirteenth century. It was not as it ought to have been even in a vision. The specter was not that of a hollow-eyed, shrunken child zealot. On the contrary, she was a daintily rounded fourteen-year-old, with dark hair deftly ruffled, and she swung herself as after a good dinner. But the marked splendor of her brown eyes showed the same unfathomable understanding as at her appearance in the lagoon bower on the previous morning. The spirit of the first confrontation and this gadder on a boulder were the same.

The exaltation induced by this materialization was so powerful that the English girl instinctively extended her hand and caught the boy's. She was on the point of directing his attention to the phantom when she saw by his rapt attitude and straining eyes that

he, too, saw the vision. He was on his knees beside her, peering across the palm-shadowed space, with gaze centered upon the wraith.

The young mistress of the isle watched the two, the monad and the phantom, not without a wave of jealousy, for there was recognition in the fixed stares of the phantom and the cliff boy.

The ghostly damsel ceased her foot-swinging and slipped from the stone. Her next movement was to lift her hands to her hair, manipulating her fingers like a skilled conjurer. From the massed braids appeared a tiny gilded cup, a spiritualized copy of the one the castaway had received as a gift from her rescuer.

The preternatural visitor raised her eyes as if in communion with some supernal supervisor of the scene, and made a swift sign of entreaty and protection. It was the maternal sign of love, devotion and unquenchable longing.

The vision began to move forward, but instantly a gray haze intervened. A low moan broke from the lips of the monad, and the castaway's eyes were diverted an instant from the specter. When she looked again the grassy foyer was empty; the phantom had vanished.

An unconquerable faintness seized her. For a moment she rocked upon her knees, then fell forward upon the turf.

She was a damsel of British birth,
He was from old Lorraine;
One of the blood of an Adelis,
One of the Channel strain.

—*Nathalia Crane*

Chapter IX

THE AVOWAL

THE swoon left the young seeress with a sweet emptiness in her mind, a vacuousness resembling the hollow of a flute unstirred by mortal breath.

She had been drawn close to the water façade of the Needle, and the spray stung her face. She was not conscious at first of the encircling arm that supported her nor of the glances of the brown eyes filled with anxiety and adoration. When she did raise her head to voice her thanks, she encountered these glances, and her own eyes sank under the stormy glow of tenderness.

Soon she was able to rise, and with clasped hands they strayed slowly back to the sand-roped area of the basin.

Gone were the last inclinations to regard

her associate as an enigma. Now she knew him. He was a scion of Lorraine as surely as she was a daughter of the British Empire. If she possessed a title, he also possessed one, and more venerable than her own.

The vapors of the torrid oval might induce hallucinations and disorders of sight, through the physical exhalations of exotic plants; but no mental exaggerations or optical illusions could leave collective testimony in the form of carved memorials and gold cups. The evidence at hand was enough to convince the stern tribunals of the law.

In her ardor the girl allowed her fancy free rein and sought to imagine the excitement the production of her escort would create in her own country, when once his lineage was made known. There would be no parallel for such a restoration of rights as she conceived, but the demonstrable truth was procurable for any court or realm. Drawings of the islet, photographs of the inscribed lat,

and sworn testimony as to the great age of the inscriptions, would be but a part of the legal presentation. The whole history of the Crusade of the Children would be revived and searched for substantiations of her declaration that one galleass had passed the Straits of Gibraltar and had discharged its pitiful passengers at her islet. The yellow scrolls of the family of the Duke of Lower Lorraine would be hunted for in every museum, library and castle in Europe. The name of Adelis, that young-old ancestress and heiress of Bouillon, would be found in the parchments, and also full verification of her departure with the children of the Crusade. The gold cup, carved with the name of the great family, would be placed in evidence, and, lastly, her charge, as a young herald, would be called from the lists of time to confront the gowned advocates and judges.

As the two walked to the lagoon, the girl worked out her case to the last detail, even to

the collection of old paintings of long-forgotten members of the extinct branches of the feudal line.

On reaching the sands they rested in the border shadows, and the evening was soon upon them. The moon rose above the barricade and ascended like a great gilded balloon. So keenly did they feel the solace of companionship that it was long before they separated for the night.

In the days that followed no signal flares were ignited. The debris of the border remained untouched save for the small hearth fires they made for the roasting of fish.

For a brief span there were forebodings, the fear on the part of the mistress of the isle that the two visions were linked with some approaching tragedy.

Day by day the sympathies of the boy and girl were drawn into closer union. It was as if the perspective of a gigantic canvas had

been blotted out, leaving a fanciful foreground with but two figures to represent the action of life.

Mirth was not always absent, and the unceasing language lessons always ended with a new string of words tied to the tongue of the neophyte. As the tally marks of the days were scratched upon the spring boulder, the primitive conversations began to stretch beyond a word for *this* or *that*, or for *how* or *when*, or *why*.

From the first the real authority rested with the girl. Gradually she began to slip into the head of the youth the necessity for routine during the remainder of their sojourn. Detail by detail she laid the system, an ordering of their daylight pilgrimages and hours of relaxation. Perhaps she supposed that it was a bowing to the edicts of a distant civilization. Certainly at first she did not understand that it was the timid step toward complete reconciliation with the new

environment. The recession from the line of modern associations passed unnoticed.

After the passage of a month she began openly to establish the comforts and refinements of life. Because of the greater heat of the afternoons, the mornings were given to varying tours of investigation, and they always returned laden with fruits and other edibles. Slowly the isle was being metamorphosed from a treacherous circular tract into a dream-tinted paradise, and the Sunken Garden into a delectable vale, filled with the fabulous luxuries of a lost era.

In these forays the youth, armed with the stone lance-head, walked in advance; for the encounter with the ghost leopard was an ever-present warning. Often they spied a serval, the African wild cat, stealing into the folds of an arras of fern, but the ferocious mate of the wood monster did not appear.

A tense unhappiness nipped them when they were separated even for minutes or by a

few rods of the languishing haunts of fern and palm.

Down the serried alleys they went, the strangely selected associates in a drama played before no known audience. To cool themselves, they waded in the limpid pools with which the wild was dotted. In the spatulated spaces they found yams and heavily stalked growths bearing tasseled cones of Indian corn. Once they chanced upon a great patch of sugar-cane, known to equatorial travelers under the name of Imphee.

On two occasions they were overtaken by the swiftly forming thunder-storms of the place, and sought shelter in the decayed hollow of a giant bombax-tree. There they nestled until the storm swept onward and left them to the freedom of their explorations.

The cloister near the lagoon had been remodeled and roofed by the youth. It was now commodious and with some pretenses of defense against rains. For himself he had

made a thatched hut some distance away, but within easy call in the event of danger.

They had mutually decided to remain domiciled near the basin; for at night there was a coolness there that mocked the sultriness of the inner terrain. There were periods of the day when the heat was so intense that venturing into the shadeless inclosures or upon the barrier crags was unbearable.

Decrepit bamboo spiles, dried to a polished suppression by the withering rays of decades, would suddenly burst with the crackling sound of heavy musketry. At such time the youth and girl sought the depths of the Garden and camped upon the banks of a restful pool.

One morning their ramble led them into a grove of low trees that were covered with olive-colored leaves and bead-shaped berries, incased in pods and resembling but one familiar form, the green bean of the coffee-tree. The administrators of the isle cleared a cala-

bash and packed it with the pods, although the youth had no idea of their use. But his companion exulted in the discovery. It added to her faith in the valley as an inexhaustible storehouse stocked with all the requirements of life.

Upon their return they removed the beans from the coverings and pulp and exposed the berries to the sun. Late in the afternoon they started their fire in a rude oven made of stones, and over the flat surfaces of heated shale they spread the split lobes. Gradually the vivid green of the granules changed to a golden brown, and the air was scented with the odor.

In one of the base crags of the granite and close to the barrier arch, there was a tiny rounded pit like the hollow of a spice mortar. With the enthusiasm of a born demonstrator the girl cleaned the cavity and half filled it with the granules of coffee. For a pestle she selected a small wedge of stone from the

splintered fragments that had fallen from the upper tiers. Crushing took the place of grinding.

To one of the experimenters it was as mystifying as a heathen rite; to the other it was the restoration of an amenity of life. With the abandoned jubilations of a nymph and faun they proceeded to the preparation of sugar-cane pulp for sweetening, and the decantation of cocoanut milk.

When these tasks were finished the experimenters thrust aside the still blazing branches of their fire and uncovered the glimmering hearth. Two cocoanut shells filled with spring water were embedded in the embers; into each receptacle was poured a sufficient quantity of the crushed seeds.

The girl was excited and hopeful. The heat took effect upon the fibrous husks and charred the outer surfaces of the shards into corrugated scales and seamed ridges, but the

shells still held the beverage. Steam rose and the decoction commenced to simmer.

Once more the improvised tongs of bamboo were brought into service, and the salvaged husks were emptied into a calabash.

The glare of day had deepened into the damasked glories of twilight when they bore the steaming essence to their fronded tea room beside the border boles. The hostess poured the rich liquid into an array of cup-shaped gourds, and offered one to her bronzed guest. In the zest of the occasion she had forgotten the complements of the sugar-cane and cocoanut milk, but the undressed drink was tempting enough and was smilingly accepted.

The hostess explained the custom and lifted one of the gourds to her lips. The guest did likewise, and thus they pledged each other in a dual vow. It was a fluid drunk since the first dawns in Abyssinia and Ethiopia, but to the young feudal wanderer of the

ages it gave no hint of an elusive past. Yet there was a perceptible acceleration of happy thought waves.

Sipping the liquid arcanum, they watched the parrots and quetzals at bedtime antics in the trees, but their fancies were pacing a new kingdom. The potent infusion was, by turns, both tranquilizing and animating.

For the young probationer, sitting at the board of a new era, it also must have contained an added tinge of wisdom. As he drank he gazed in wistful silence at the girl. He was certain that sooner or later she would vanish from his ken, even as that mothering damsel of the vision had slipped into nothingness. If the coffee held a stimulating edge, it also contained the vivifying power of past experiences, wherein the swift removal of things cared for was the order of life. Withed and gyved by yearnings hitherto unknown, he felt an inexpressionable premonition of pain, as if the practised fingers of an

evil necromancer were pressing upon his heart. What love meant, he did not know, but now there was always present the desire to kneel and grovel at the feet of his adored preceptress and shining one, who might disappear between breaths, after the fashion of the mothering demoiselle of the glade.

The cause of all this tumult of tenderness contented herself for a while in arrogantly clicking the gourd cups. If there were responsive tremors and vibrations of the soul, she, unlike her companion, was not blind to their source. She was cognizant of the crises that impend in all human breasts, no matter what the degree of culture or extreme of caste. They were things lovely, or unlovely, but as unchangeable as the character of a smile or the contour of a tear.

She recalled a gray-haired story-teller of her childhood, a constant and honored visitor in her ancestral halls, who placed nature on a

pedestal and likened civilization to a volcanic ash that was surely burying the grandeur and beauty of the world. That story-teller—she remembered him well; he was always declaring that the tenure of life amounted but to a hop, skip and jump—had spun marvelous yarns of the sea, yet never had he told such a tale as was now within her power to tell.

She raised her eyes and allowed the dilating gray disks to rest upon the face of the youth. With uptilted head he was apparently immersed in a study of the heavens.

She caught his hand.

Here was one so simple, so gentle, and so free from all the tainting heresies of humankind, the ideal of an innocent, chivalrous prince. Despite his courage he would fall an easy victim to melancholy in the new life into which she purposed to introduce him after their rescue. The defensive indifference of the artilized Aryan would not be understood by him until the lapse of a long interval, and

he would need her presence constantly. The thought carried a measure of sweetness.

She had powerful friends, but the establishment of priority claims for her charge, the passing upon titles and estates might take long, and it might be many, many months before he entered into the dukedom as the direct descendant of Adelis, the lost heiress of Lower Lorraine.

She was looking far ahead, searching for ideas that unmask complications or interference with her plans.

People born and nurtured in one climate often succumb to the rigors or utter softness of another zone. This heir of Godfrey of Bouillon now carried the tendencies of the tropics in his blood. Stamina for one place was not necessarily stamina for another place. Tinted to the color tone of a gilded Adonis, and seasoned to a life in the torrid belt, what would happen if he were sent into the chilled atmosphere of the north?

The desire for vindication of all her convictions drove her to her feet. Looking upward into the heavily sentried dome of the night, she saw and recognized a glimmering group of stars, the southern constellation of Octans. The golden dots of the half quadrant brightened, flickered and died out, only to reappear with intense brilliancy, as if enacting the flashes of a heliographed message.

Pointing to the constellation, which waxed and waned like the florid lanterns of the fireflies swinging from the borders of the Sunken Garden, the girl addressed her gravely attentive consort.

"Once we were as far apart as the stars of Octans and the earth. We were prohibited from all communion by immeasurable distances, and to each was given a different mortal stole to wear during the span of our brief terrestrial pilgrimage.

"In the darkness and terror of a storm, fate canceled our daily routine, dismissed dimensions and cardinal customs.

"There was an ordination, voiced in the tornado, an upheaval of the drowsing strata of life, and we were inducted into a solitude to face the original ordeals of time.

"We were alike wretched and abandoned until we found each other and walked these glades in sweet companionship. We paid the price of estrangement from all that was formerly dearest and best. From you the price was exacted in levies upon a line of immured island ancestors, the flotsam of a stranded argosy; from me it was snatched in the swoop of a tropical tempest.

"And now I add a given name to that heritage of the north, to the meadows of Lower Lorraine where title lapsed.

"You are Octans, drawing an old, yet ever-new serenity from a namesake in the skies, and I am Orena, Duchess of Kendal, in West-

moreland and Glastonbury, in the Counties of Somerset and Kent."

The youth was kneeling in ardent devotion before her.

Overcome by the swift flood of her emotions and the transcendental magnetism of the moment, the girl sank upon the fern-pillowed floor of the lectern. Their faces touched, and immediately their lips met in a kiss, the first reconnoiter of innocent and pastoral love. It was the eternal meeting always carefully depicted by human hope but seldom consummated in so perfect a setting, and never with the contracting parties so utterly at variance in their conceptions of the progress of human events.

Nevertheless they were of equal rank, age and lineage. One was a daughter of the new things, but willing to waive all claim to a fictitious superiority founded upon the classified learning accorded to her by the opportunities of position. The other was a scion of

the old things, eager to attain to the standards set by a bewildering goddess.

After their first kiss they knew the reason for the mutual attraction that had drawn them steadily to one another ever since their startling encounter on the ledge. To the girl it was an open, clearly outlined, natural expression of life; to her adorer it was garbed in all the mysticism of an esoteric religion.

Something had entered their lives that had swept all other considerations aside, and left each one contented and wildly happy because of the proximity of a beloved presence.

There were no censorious counselors at hand to chide them for the lateness of hour. The night, the moon, the stars were theirs, and the only interloper a soft breeze that wandered through the buttress arch and tiptoed down the length of the redolent borders.

Forth from their retreats in the coppices fluttered the cohorts of black and magenta moths, the gamins of the darkness, and once

more fell into their winged gait along the airy footpaths above the slumbering lagoon. A night bird, deep in the distant tangles of the shrouded tazza, gave a faint love call. It was answered by a series of notes, like the muffled fanfare of a medieval trumpeter. A breeze, roused by the rapture of an island romance, passed onward into the wild, and straightway the vistas, dominoed in gloom, began to stir audibly, as if tidings of great import had been imparted.

Through the long years there have been many attestants to this prescience of nature and the intuitions of the apparently inanimate. On this night the valley was shaken from its usual somnolence. The slight trade breeze was a willful augmenter, and under its influence the great depression became a peculiarly effective sounding-board, increasing and deflecting the contact noises of the swaying reeds, and marking the diapason ris-

ing from the hollow, open-topped trunks of the dead cottonwoods.

It was an archetypal symphony, an interpretation of the legendary significance of the Sunken Garden, and the wavering cadences of the wild were wafted to the ears of the two love-stricken plighters of vows, nestling under the moonlight of the basin.

As the breeze continued its campaign in the valley there issued from the vague musical medley of rustling monotones and lisping meters a certain lyric quality. It swelled to the clearness of a chant and with all the definiteness of a choir of juveniles singing some holy hymn in celestial treble.

All this wondrous vocalization was attributable to the vagaries of a night wind, birthed in some far southern bayou, a breeze that had bopeeped through the fissure in the buttress, and had unlatched the pasterns guarding a sleeping harmony. The song, mixed with barbaric chords, glorified the first

childish argonauts, the infantile Crusaders who had trod the runways in the ages agone, and it exulted in the heavenly guile that had brought two golden-hearted lovers together from the outposts of a universe.

When the invading breeze lost its ardor and commenced to languish in the vales, the sacred measures ceased, leaving in place of the celestial noises the unalterable sweetness of all the medieval memories of the heart.

The subsidence was gradual, as if a band of choristers, still bent upon a juvenile journey to some far Jerusalem of the soul, had passed onward singing, into the uttermost recesses of the charmed tazza.

There was the cup and the candlestick,
  There was the play-sword blade,
Waiting to take the witness stand,
  Proving a child's crusade.

—*Nathalia Crane*

Chapter X

THE CAVERN

THE first faint glimmerings of daylight awakened them.

For Orena and Octans it was the happiest of all the mornings they had ever known. Long after midnight they had parted, and now from their divided anchorages of rest their voices floated down the arabesqued length of the basin's fringe. Softly the great bastions of granite, the protecting walls of this new nursery of first love and hope, echoed their names.

Their minds were still drenched with the distillations of the most potent of all earthly emotions, and every thought was colored by the raptures of remembered avowals. As they crossed the sands to greet, and despite the embarrassment of the girl, there was but

one fear in their hearts, that the magical isle, by some necromancy, might intervene and take them bodily from each other.

They drew together on the yellow carpet of the shingle.

The girl submitted to the embrace, and with stained cheeks received the kisses of her adorer. Thus the new day added two tender additions to the repertoire of the storied and dream-haunted isle. In the hushed expectancy of the hour they were posed as two pictorial pagans, outside the pale of the present, and knowing only the candor and the loveliness of the pasture.

That which they possessed, the gentleness, love and faith of youth, could not be entirely adulterated or subtracted by any new set of circumstances, and that which they hoped was as much, if not more, of all that the world had ever visioned. In sooth, if all were lost before another dawn, and they themselves swept from existence, they would

still be the gainers in the predestined experiences of life.

For a long time they strolled the border or loitered under the trellises, stealing glances at each other and uttering the extravagant phrases of awakened affections.

In Orena of the Kendals the latent wistfulness of one desirous of kin and country had been relegated to a sealed and merely reminiscent chamber of the mind. In Octans, the long isolated scion of the old Lorraine family, there took place a resuscitation of mental equipment and of the affections, dormant for centuries.

Under the prying eyes of the wood-doves and quetzals they kissed and caught eagerly at the promises of the future, planning and inventing in a breath a lifetime of uninterrupted and happy companionship. The islet was their own, free from the litigation of all outsiders, and they could barter for such intercourse with the world as they cared to,

timing their ultimate rescue to please themselves. Of course they would venture into that other world across the wastes after they had planned their own movements, but for an interval the islet gave them breathing space. Its prodigality of supplies of all kinds, raiment, food and water, its enticing vineyards and cocoanut avenues, its flowery lunettes made them feel it was their own estate forever, set apart, to which they would eventually return after compliance with the demands of the regulating machinery of civilization.

The girl knew that as a matter of purchase the lawful possession of the islet was within her power. She, also, was the last of her line in title descent and well able to pleasure herself, if she saw fit, by adding an islet to her holdings.

Rescue was merely delayed, and all plans must be in order in the event of the unexpected appearance of a ship.

They were now well able to exchange concrete ideas in speech, for the youth's inherited acumen had seized upon each new word with an avidity born of long denial; but Orena could not disclose all of her plans to her consort. He knew nothing of the real reason for his presence in the tropics, and possessed only hazy conceptions of a mysterious ancestry. It would take many, many lessons in English before she could make him familiar with the story of his inherited name and the annals of a great family, and explain the meanings of the wanderings of the first waif of the Bouillon strain.

Yet it could be done, and must be followed by a presentation of his claims. That was her task.

Late in the morning they commenced a new pilgrimage, scaling the eastern cliffs of the barrier, at a point where the rain-worn, cracked ledges rose sheer from the further side of the lagoon. There were so many hold-

ing spurs that the ascent was not difficult. From the seamy crest they viewed the vast stretches of the Atlantic, rolling in dazzling blue billows under the tropic sun.

This section of the circular buttress was flattened on the top to the smoothness of a platform and varied in width from fifty to two hundred feet. It was not unlike the wall of an ancient city in the rise of the scarp and in the smoothness of the top, due to the rains of æons.

But there was a new aspect to this rocky platform; something had been added since her first visit, made the day after her escape from the rat-trap boat in the lagoon. The parapet was now dotted with the nests of sea-birds, gulls, floaters, and cliff pigeons. Overhead the parent birds winged in circles uttering harsh cries. In some of the nests there were already eggs, but never more than three.

All were newly laid, and wherever there

were three they helped themselves to one. After scanning the sea for any sight of sail or smoke, they descended and walked to the further end of the lagoon. In a shallow runlet that emptied into the pool they sank the eggs in a weighted frond basket to preserve them from the heat.

It was while they were thus occupied that Octans drew Orena's attention to a hitherto unnoticed fissure close at hand in the barrier, only a few feet from the northern termination of the lagoon.

It was a black, repelling aperture that suggested the den of a wild animal. She turned from it in aversion, but so insistent were the gestures and smiles of her consort that she approached the orifice. Even then she was in no degree assured. Her eyes saw nothing but the opening to the lairage of a beast; and the possibility that it was tenanted by a creature like the ghost leopard caused her to shudder and clutch her companion's arm.

But he laughed and pointed into the fissure as if he had long known of it and had merely forgotten to call her attention to it. There was something there, something odd and hidden.

To coerce her into sharing his own interest and to thoroughly reassure her, Octans touched the gold cup that swung from the grass necklace at her throat.

"The same," he said in English, using one of the tiny phrases of his first lessons in an alien tongue.

"The same!" cried Orena. "How can they be the same? One is a cup"—she kissed the graven token—"the other is a cave."

But the earnest one again touched the token and pointed to the yawning aperture with an assurance that convinced her of the truth of an unguessed relationship between the two. Yet she was willing, even desirous to forego further exploration. The black cavity had too threatening an aspect. Lean-

ing over the outer edge she perceived that it was a true entrance leading into the very bowels of the huge buttress. The orifice was large enough to permit of the passage of the upright human form of a twelve-year-old child.

Octans murmured one of the routine sentences he had learned, the words, "Permit me," and moved toward the opening.

Orena interposed herself. Was she to allow the youth, accepted in her heart as her fiancé, to step forward into this possible pitfall or snare? She had traveled too far, experienced too many agonizing moments to allow her lover to place himself in useless jeopardy.

She questioned him.

"Have you ever entered before?" she asked.

"Many times," replied her apt pupil, and the promptness and understanding of the answer pleased her.

"Was there danger?" she asked. To emphasize her meaning, she touched the stone lance-head in the youth's girdle.

"No danger," was the immediate and tranquil response.

Orena stood aside and motioned to him to enter, but with misgivings as to the wisdom of granting the permission.

Octans slipped like a shadow into the orifice.

He was absent from her side little more than a minute. To Orena it seemed an almost endless interval. Scarcely had he vanished into the black hollow when she began to call, poignantly voicing his name. The gaping aspect of the mouth of the den wrought upon her nerves, and in her dismay she commenced to sob upon one lifted arm like a very child.

But there was no need of grief. Her arm was drawn down, and by her fellow-adventurer. He was standing before her waving a

small gold candlestick. Its base was formed of the carven paws of the lion, and the candle cylinder was covered with scrollwork. It was a rare old piece of workmanship, daintily designed and fit for the turret chamber of a princess.

Orena turned it over in her hands wondering at its freedom from tarnish. The polished surface was as undimmed as the day it had left the goldsmith's shop and journeyed to the halls of knighthood.

They seated themselves on the sand, and the salvager of the candlesitck sketched a map on the soil. It was a rude tracing but formed a clear illustration of the lead and its ramifications. Two heavy lines showed the inner and outer faces of the great buttress, while a long mark joining the two proved that there was a secret channel through the crags, extending from the lagoon side to the ocean façade.

With renewed confidence, Orena declared

her willingness to follow her guide into the crevasse.

Octans led the way. The interior of the first narrow passage was not as dark as she had supposed. The side walls receded as they advanced, and before she was aware, they were within a spacious, sand-strewn vault, domed at a great height and dimly lighted as by many hidden tapers in the upper partitions and arc of the roof.

But the chief wonder was a small altar set at one side of the chamber, made of carefully piled splinters of granite. On it was still standing the mate to the gold candlestick. On the wall, directly back of the altar and suspended from a spiked stone, was a small metal girdle made of a series of linked plates embossed with griffins after the manner of armorial bearings. Upon the flooring there were the fragments of a broken piece of pottery.

The girl caught her breath and pressed her

hand upon her breast to stop the violent beating of her heart. Here was a discovery that matched the tomb of Tut-Ankh-Amen. Half the historians of Europe would lose their poise at the thought of such an uncovering of fact.

She was standing within the last sanctuary of the lost Children of the Crusade, their refuge from storms and perchance their communal house. A glittering object below the altar drew her eyes; she stooped and picked it up. It was a small poignard, a child's trinket rather than a real weapon. In the dim light she could not make out the characters engraved upon the handle. Nevertheless she knew it was another indisputable proof of the one-time occupancy by the youthful saints.

Upon the further side of the chamber, directly opposite the side from which they had entered, was another passage.

Octans and Orena entered this slit and after traversing it a dozen steps emerged

from the gut on to a balcony of the outer scarp of the cliff, in the full daylight. It was then that the girl realized the vantage points of the great cavern. It was a storm-proof haven, airy, dry and easily made impregnable by the blocking of the islet entrance. Approach on the sea face was impossible because of the elevation and protrusion of the crags directly under the balcony.

It was all a huge riddle at first, this great hollow with its curving dome and the two passageways connecting it with the outer perspectives, the sea on one side, the tazza on the other. She wondered if the lost children of the one lucky galleass had kept a lookout upon the balcony in the days of their peaceful captivity.

She always reverted to those distant days as one of tranquillity, for surely they had not dared to cross to the treacherous mainland, at least not until after the lapse of years.

The maid and the youth remained on the

balcony for nearly an hour staring at the azure line of the horizon, or studying the jutting line of the barrier and the basking Atlantic below. After that the girl carefully paced the length and breadth of their fortress.

The adamantine intestines, with the distended pouch that formed the chamber, was about one hundred feet in length. It was apparent that this boring through the buttress had been made in distant ages by the sea when the lagoon bed was at a much lower level, and when the gnawing surf had seized upon an unencumbered right of way through the rocky arch. Some softer vein in the buttress had given way before the incessant buffeting. In that epoch the bowl of the isle undoubtedly held a salty sea answering to the tides, even as the lagoon now responded to the ebb and flow through the arch. In a later period volcanic action must have produced an upheaval of the bed of the lagoon and partial obstruction of the sea channel. The inun-

dated area was bared and after centuries became a fertile valley.

When Orena and Octans returned to the central chamber, she was filled with new wonderment. From the rocky ceiling there was a filtration of saffron light. The rays descended from concealed crevices in the vaulted dome of the rotunda and formed shimmering cross-bars. Evidently the light was of a diaphanous source, for there were no traces of rain-water in the cave. The crevices threaded the upper tiers of stone for many feet and admitted the subdued sunlight through invisible vents.

Orena and Octans gazed into each other's eyes. They had found their refuge from storm and danger, their final fireside in the heart of a crag.

The marked coolness of the great cavity was a delightful contrast to the radiating heat waves of the exposed sands of the lagoon.

Joyously they circled the cavern, and like children they dabbled their hands in the soft silt that carpeted the rocky floor, allowing it to escape in silvery cascades.

The girl enthusiastically poured forth her plans for the new abode, and Octans caught eagerly at the possibilities of her magical survey.

The colorful and creative mind of the maid already saw the cavern transformed into a habitable home. The Sunken Garden must yield its floss and bamboo for divan, couch, and taboret; the reeds of the lagoon for tapestries; the painted grasses of the glades for rugs. The textiles were at hand; time offered scope. The simplicity, the graciousness of the plan pleased her beyond all measure. Bewitched by the vision of the attainable, she triumphantly trod the chamber, measuring dimensions with her sandaled feet. Her eyes were moist and tender with

dreams as she spoke and gestured the essentials of her plans.

"Surely," she cried, "we shall find ample supplies of saps and resin for flambeaux, so that we may defy the gloom and tediousness and torpidity of the rainy season. It may be practicable to construct a charcoal fireplace under one of the real outlets in the vault, and so we may be able to prepare our food without exposure to the weather.

"There are so many things that beckon us. Somewhere within our domain there are banks of fire-clay, tasco for cups and all the pottery we need. Fire would render them serviceable.

"There must be flax, or floss resembling flax, from which real raiment may be wrought. Oh, we have tasks, but God has given us time and after all the fairest place in the whole wide world."

She turned her lambent eyes upon the

youth. Happiness shone in the dilated pupils. Octans was drawn to her side, and he fell upon his knees at her feet.

Orena, Duchess of Kendal, had renounced all thought of rescue, banished all plans for beacons on the bluff.

Long after their entrance they reluctantly left the cavern and fared into the Sunken Garden to take account of its infinite variety of offerings. On the first day of the home-making, they found quantities of tallow berries fit for candles. These, with bundles of bamboo shoots and strappings of jungle floss, were carried to the shore of the basin.

In the eagerness of the days that followed they collected a hoard of rich raw materials and stored the bales near the lagoon for the furnishing and provisioning of the cavern. The girl made the selections and the youth transported the packages. It was as if they anticipated a siege, or purposed to stock a

mansion. Orena, diligent in her search for exudations of pitch, found trees in dense areas that yielded abundant masses of inflammable gums. They separated the amber-colored substances with the lance-head.

Daily under the palms, they lingered over their luncheons of fruit and cocoanut milk. Octans spurned the nuts upon the ground. He climbed the ninety-foot stems of the cocoanut-palms and made his own selection from the feathery head-leaves.

Their exhaustive searches led them into virgin zones beneath the eastern arc of cliffs. There their attention was drawn to a wilderness of coarse stalks cluttered with long, narrow, pointed leaves. Orena recognized the scent. She rubbed one of the leaves. It gave forth the familiar odor of tobacco. Later they found pepper-trees, and gathered the aromatic pimento berries for seasoning. High up in the hollow trunk of a dead bom-

bax-tree Octans located an inexhaustible hoard of wild honey.

The combs were wedged in the cavity, and the upper part of the bole, filled with the more recent accumulations from the nectaries of flowers, acted as a vise and caused a constant dripping of the syrupy secretions in the lower cells. The drying out of the dead tree had added to the constriction under which the combs were yielding. Octans placed a calabash at the base of the hollow trunk to catch the celestial seepage. They returned to the tree late in the afternoon and found the calabash full of nectar. They removed it and put an empty calabash in its place.

The foraging surveys occupied the greater part of each day—there was such a wealth of magical material at hand. The evenings were surrendered to luxurious intimacy and the confidences of the plighted. Language lessons were not overlooked, and little by little

the fluency of easily understood words was restored to the youth as to a prince who had merely forgotten.

Not only speech, but the ceremonials and formalities of advanced community life were skillfully and quietly introduced by Orena. With all her heart she had set herself the task of arming Octans for ordeals of inspection, comparison and appraisal, ordeals that would be operative from the first moment of their rescue until his rehabilitation as a missing historical personage and heir to the fortunes and glory of a great family was complete. Often at their evening meals Orena, in simple words, described the bourn toward which she believed they were tending, her own country, wherein she could command friends and resources.

Under the first stars of the short twilights they dallied over their replenished stocks of coffee, or strolled the verge of the lagoon,

until complete darkness hushed the bickering of the birds, and only a single sound broke the silence, the soughing of the surf, heard through the buttress arch, a luted litany of the sea.

SANCTUARY

It was a home
  Roofed by a cavern dome;
For lighting scheme—
  The braziers of a dream.

The walls were rayed
  With jaspers and with jade;
The sandy floor
  Was whiter than the shore.

There was a wheel
  Full-fashioned without the steel;
A daised space
  With lattices like lace.

And to that manse
  Set in a rocky stance,
There came to stay
  The brown eyes and the gray.

—*Nathalia Crane*

Chapter XI

SANCTUARY

In succeeding days Orena and Octans became more than ever absorbed in pastoral employments, assembling the materials for their home in the buttress cavern. The genius of the girl rose above all difficulties. She knew the rudiments of carpentry and was mistress of the decorative arts.

By degrees she initiated Octans, teaching him crude methods of joining and splicing, cabinet-making and dyeing, and always with an eye to European fabrications.

Her excited pupil caught the creative impulse. Forward enough in the language lessons, he displayed truly amazing skill as an artificer. A rough leaf-tracing or a demonstration of the use of things conveyed ample information, and left Orena free to work

upon the finer and more delicate duplications of desired fittings.

It seemed as if the Sunken Garden had entered into conspiracy with the two, for all that they sought they found, even to the bank of tasco for pottery.

The station beside the lagoon became a workshop, littered with the merchandise of the wild. Gradually the sanctuary in the rocks was transformed into a habitable abode.

There were lounges of polished bamboo, padded with cushionets made from the down of sea-birds; skeleton taborets, and wall cabinets for their possessions. In the center of the cavern Octans constructed a circular stand with refectory benches, backed and stained to a deep mahogany.

Upon the sand that overlay the rocky floor, Orena spread her handiwork, mats of jute, dyed with the red and blue juices of jungle berries, and against the walls she placed the basket-work hampers intended for the stor-

age of provender, the dried fruits, the smoke-cured food, so painstakingly prepared, the vats of honey, and scores of other flavored offerings of the valley.

The great orifice, domed like a miniature Sistine, had become another sort of place under the witchery of a girl's fingers. The walls were strung with red and yellow hangings, the meshed magnificence of the vales, and there were mural sketches in colors done by the girl on the smoother surfaces. There was an evanescent oriental adaptation to the whole arrangement of the enormous grotto, and yet the comfort, order and stateliness of European home environment were present and accented.

But it was Orena's couch that gave irrefutable evidence of the superior natural capacity and workmanship of her artisan of the wild. It was built upon a dais of heavy bamboo, with fretted panels set in the frame, and with tall posts that supported a canopy of

woven grass. There were russet curtains, wrought from the fine fibers of the rush and reed, glittering with the inlay of pearly sea shells, and caught by rich bands of braided grass that terminated in the golden tassels of the Carnahuba.

In all this mixed splendor of barbarity and refinement, there was one ever-present suggestion, that of an altruistic domicile of love and hope.

The girl could not have achieved it by herself, for the labor represented was beyond her endurance. The mystical intelligence of the youth had sprung forward in answer to her desires. His mind, once dormant from lonely preoccupations and the uncompanioned tenancy of the tropical wastes, had gained an impetuous vigor. Yet, despite the progress the two had made in the work of furnishing the cavern, there were numerous fittings still to be completed.

The days dissolved with marvelous rapid-

ity, and the weeks ran into months. They were so completely occupied in their affections and so intent upon the furnishing of a castle embedded in a cliff that time swept on unheeded.

Orena knew that she reigned completely and absolutely over the heart of Octans, and she was filled with a brooding happiness. Both looked forward to the rapidly approaching day when the great hollow would be ready to receive them.

To Orena the completion of the elaborate cavern setting may have appeared as a visualization of her plan to surround her companion with all the attractions of a modern residence. But hand in hand with this conception walked the eternal desire for a home where the heart could be at rest.

Was it by design that now no fires were lighted on the shores of the basin, that no pole with flaunting signal beckoned from the buttress arch? These elemental efforts look-

ing to release were forgotten or purposely discarded. The days simply spilled contentment and happiness into the girl's lap and strolled away with the last shreds of interest in over-sea ties. The only fear that ever fluttered from her retrospective moods was that of interruption from her own kind.

Upon her islet she was dictatress, answerable to none but herself and the chosen of her heart. Physical influences outside human control had slipped her into the depression of a rocky sea oval and had ushered into her presence the one being it was her evident fate to meet. It was a dispensation, a reversal of old statutes; it surely held some esoteric bearing upon all life.

It was true that she might be charged with a certain dilatoriness, a well-defined laxity in not burning signals night and day upon the parapets; but the urgency for haste in quitting the islet was for herself to decide, not

for those who were ignorant of her adventures.

For her life had walked backward, even as it had done for Octans, and the retreat from the actualities of modernity was far more impressive than the advance to modernity had ever been. Back of all the splendor and loveliness of their rendezvous was a reason. To Orena it meant the eventual restoration of Octans to his ancestral rights and their union before the world.

For the present—the unutterably happy present. In response to the authority of their own lives, she had drawn a veil over the past, shutting out all pictures of other places and times.

Orena had been successful in her quest for fire-clay.

There was a bank of tasco in a quarry of crumbling stone a few hundred feet to the eastward of the buttress arch. Octans trans-

ported the clay to their roofless workshop, and there the girl-adept molded and burned at night a great variety of serviceable ware. She made fragile cups and bowls, staining the clay with brilliant colors before she fired them.

Their evening meal was always spread beneath the border mangroves, but now a table topped with split reeds and rush stools gave dignity to the repast.

Together they gave an entire day to the molding of two tall braziers for the cavern. The standards and basins were made from masses of tasco mixed with other clays and were hardened overnight in a slow fire. The basins were elevated five feet on the mountings and the octagon standards, before the final burning in a turf kiln, were ornamented with the imprint of leaves.

One of the braziers was to be used for cooking in the rainy season, and the fire-bowl was shaped for the burning of char-

coal. The other was intended for lighting and the consumption of scented gums. There were cunningly contrived gratings in the fire-bowls and ventilating ducts.

Few youths could have lifted the braziers, yet Octans carried them easily to their sanctuary and installed them in the center of the cavern at equal distances from the circular stand.

The altar of the young knights errant and little ladies who had long passed from the chamber on their last pilgrimage was left in its original position, and the golden candlesticks reposed upon it; but scented candles made by the two amateurs now filled the sockets. From the night fires they systematically saved charcoal, and from the runways of the wild collected the perfumed exudations of a variety of trees, thus augmenting their supply of resins. The charcoal and the resins were stored in two great hampers in the chamber.

There was such a varied diet from which to choose that they were never at a loss in making selections. They made bread of plantain paste and cocoanut milk, omelets from the eggs of sea-birds, touched with pimento or the juice of limes. Octans killed small deer, trapped Guinea fowl, and caught fish in the flooded crevices under the arch. The hunter continually brought in game, rare fruits, honey, nuts and yams. Quarters of the deer were cured with salt from the ledges in the improvised smoke-house used at night, and the girl preserved figs, dates and sliced oranges in calabashes of pure honey. In the evenings they threw bunches of plantains upon the embers of the beach fire. The juices evaporated under the heat, and the dried pulp was reduced to flour.

Never was there sweeter dictatress than Orena. Led by the luring light of the gray eyes, her enslaved confederate boldly attempted whatever she devised.

Under her beguiling guidance he worked blindly upon a puzzling mechanism, the necessity for which he could not fathom until he saw it in operation. The assembled parts consisted of a wheel, a holding frame, a treadle, a spindle and distaff.

On the evening of its completion Octans placed it in the cavern. The great braziers blazed, and the smokeless flames revealed the circular chamber in all its fantastic beauty. The effect was magical. There was the canopied couch, the flaunting tapestries upon the walls, the colored mats, the polished stands and the candled altar of the innocents. The flaming braziers transformed the cavern into a subterranean temple.

For Octans the goddess of the temple was incarnate in Orena. In her youthful loveliness she was seated upon a stool beside the puzzling mechanism. In her right hand she held the distaff, and as her sandaled foot pressed the treadle, the fairy fibers of the

white flax fled through her fingers to the revolving spindle.

In the vividness of her intelligence and passion she was, for the moment, holding the threads of fate in her own fair hands. She realized and was happy. There was no prescience of evil. Their home was complete, and they had passed under the portal.

Beware the sloughs that ancient tricks repeat—
  The sloven fen, where sits an old deceit;
For 'neath a lotus or a padded ling
  The python's head prepares the fatal spring.

—*Nathalia Crane*

Chapter XII

THE AMBUSCADE

THE python was looped in silent ugliness on a rock in a fen of the Sunken Garden. Below the terraced stone there was a grotto and a stagnant water-hole fed by a slimy seepage from a concealed reservoir of rain-water.

Despite the seeming siesta of the huge snake, the place was an ambuscade. The rock and water-hole were wreathed by hulking ferns, disposed in immense arches and spirals, rank with humidity.

The thirty-foot reptile lay in the form of a figure eight. The abhorrent head of the dumb demon protruded at an angle from the symmetrical folds. In color the python was a pale brown above, with sienna side blotches edged with sinuous black borders. The head could strike with the force of a battering

ram. The constricting power of the diabolical creature was beyond conception.

A thousand moons had marked the growth of the odious ophidian. Its lethal length and leprous luster were intimidating enough, but the baleful head, the stony lidless eyes with elliptical pupils and frozen stare were the acme of repulsiveness and horror. From the labyrinth of fetid folds there arose an exhalation, a stench that tainted the air suspiciously.

In the privacy of this dank market-place the python regius bartered at intervals for flesh, selecting with biting kiss and slaughtering embrace.

Upon the surface of the slough below there floated a single lily, a blue lotus. On an arching fern that overhung the slough, and balanced as upon a lectern, there was a bird, a crimson lory. The intriguing lotus floated in placid expectancy. The bird continually opened its beak as if to emit a betraying cry

but no sound issued from the ruffled throat. The lotus and the lory were awaiting a well-understood event.

As if in response to a secret signal, there was a significant lateral loosening of the python's folds. The monstrous column of muscle flowed over the verge of the rock and descended into the slough. Convolution after convolution vanished into the opacity of the pool.

With startling suddenness the lotus dipped its gorgeous petals and slipped beneath the ripples; the lory gave a gratified cry and fled in swift flight. When the ripples subsided the conniving water nymph, the lotus, reappeared and floated in seeming innocence upon the slime. Beside it, but cloaked by a lily-pad, rose the head of the submerged ophidian.

Octans and Orena laden with shoulder baskets were returning from an exploration of the eastern arc of the islet when they ob-

served a blind trail that led into the fen. The youth turned into the trail, and the girl, always expectant of new acquisitions, followed her companion. The detour was a short one. Almost immediately it ended at the margin of a slovenly pond backed by a rock.

Octans saw nothing worth adding to their baskets. He turned to retrace his way when Orena caught a glimpse of the blue lotus. She was wearing a bandeau of flowers and desired the lily for a final ornament. She stayed her consort with a touch and pointed to the lotus.

Octans laughed and unslung his basket. There was no need to enter the water-hole. The lily floated close to the bank. Octans was on one knee and in the act of thrusting forward his left arm when his restless eyes perceived the partially concealed, swart head of the python.

In that flashing instant all things were clear

to the jungle-bred male. He knew that if he ceased the forward movement of his arm the monstrous serpent would strike; if he sought to rise the reptile would be upon him before he could regain his feet and draw the stone knife. His fear was for the girl.

He gave a warning cry insistent and terrible, but not for the fraction of a second did he pause in reaching for the betraying lily. As his fingers clutched the lotus his right hand unsheathed the lance-head.

The spring of the python turned the waterhole into a bedeviled cauldron. The ophidian had hurled a third of its blotched column from the murky liquid. The head struck Octans midway between the left shoulder and neck and threw him upon his back. The recurving teeth sank into the flesh. The stunning blow was but the preface to the death grip of the weltering coil.

But the onset of the age-bloated reptile did not smother the resourcefulness of the

jungle fighter. His knife hand was free, and thrice he pierced the satanic head with the flint fang before the first searching fold bound his legs in an ever-tightening noose. Slashing downward he mutilated the python's head, but more than once the lance-head passed through to his own breast. Swiftly the lance-head rose and fell in perforating and rending strokes that gashed the monster's brain.

Orena, half demented by the hideous sight, ran blindly into the turmoil. She was struck by a lashing coil of the serpent, lifted from the ground, and thrown in among the rank ferns.

Three folds of the serpent were pressing Octans in a vise-like grip when the jaws of the reptile yielded. The knife-torn head of the ophidian was flung violently upward. In the confusion of its contortions, or as if disgorging distasteful prey, the snake tossed Octans clear of its folds. He lay as one par-

alyzed, and still in danger of reembracement by the writhing reptile, now lashing the fen in the fury and agony of death.

Orena, breathing in long-drawn, shuddering gasps, dragged herself from the heavy trellage of the ferns. Recklessly she ran to Octans. Love, fear and grief gave her strength. Slowly she drew the jungle youth away from the lashing, twisting fury of the great serpent's death struggle. She kissed the graying face and called endearing names, the while she panted for air.

There was a water-gourd in one of their baskets. She salvaged the basket, risking her life by the act, for the vital principle was strong in the python, and its coils still held the destroying power. After moistening the lips of her consort she tried to stanch the blood that welled from the punctured wounds made by the lance-head, and from the deep lacerations of the python's teeth. But there were internal injuries caused by the terrible

constriction, and for these there were no remedies.

Shaken by the violence of her own heart throbs, she nevertheless coaxed Octans back to a semblance of consciousness, and by gentle urging caresses wooed him to his knees. From her kirtle she had ripped strips of braided grass and bound the wounds. Then, by tender coercion, she aided him to his feet. They commenced a slow lurching progress. Step by step the girl fought with the deadly weakness of her companion. She, who hitherto had disdained all danger because of the prowess of her protector, dared not chance a night in the Sunken Garden, haunted by lurking beasts and fearful reptiles.

Octans could not speak. The tortured body could scarcely find energy for the shambling gait. Twilight closed upon them and delayed the faltering, agonizing march. Often a twining liana impeded their slow march, while the darting flight of tropical

bats and moths poured new fears into the girl.

Over and over she stabbed herself with the thought of the blue lotus, the flower that had been their undoing, the floating bud that had so treacherously masked the hideous stratagem of the snake. Never again would she turn her eyes upon a lotus. Never, never again.

With straining arms she guided her swaying consort through the darkness. Faith, love and hope beckoned them onward. In the end she achieved her purpose, that of bringing her stricken lover to the security of the cavern. Not until he lay upon her couch in the circular chamber did she release her supporting arms.

Bravely at first she strove against the feeling that her efforts were inadequate and hopeless. She cleansed the wounds in the breast and shoulder and padded them with pledgets of floss tightly bound.

There was at hand one of their later experiments, a quantity of zested grape wine. She poured the liquid between the twitching lips. Cooling compresses were hurriedly prepared and applied to the constricted chest and discolored limbs. By every conceivable means she tried to ease the outraged body.

In her utter wretchedness she babbled of the halcyon hours of their companionship and strove to rouse Octans with soft, beseeching words. But he, lost in lethargy, could not hear the words or feel the entreating kisses. He lay upon his back, life wavering in the gasping breath. His hands were tightly clenched. His eyes were open but unseeing.

In her black extremity Orena fell upon her knees by the couch, and sobbed and begged him not to leave her.

The fires in the braziers burned with ghastly radiance.

Praying brokenly the watcher kept her vigil beside the couch. The rocky chamber

had a supernatural aspect. The flaring standards threw into high relief the kneeling form of the stricken maid and the motionless figure upon the daised couch.

The hours, the invisible handmaidens of the gods, stole silently in and out. One by one, as they entered, they brought the chalices of grief and despair. One by one, as they departed, they bore away the fast-ebbing essences of vitality.

There was in progress that most ancient of all ceremonials. Two shadowy masters of the ritual stood within the portals. One was the shadow of desolation, the other the shadow of death. Between them was another presence, the mystical personification of love.

Slowly the two masters of woe approached the dais.

Orena understood. She raised her head, stretched forth her arms in divine entreaty,

and cried the name of her lover. All the agony of her heart surged in that one cry.

Love touched the mortal ruin on the couch. The arms of Octans reached out and stole around the girl in a last embrace. The brown eyes gazed once more into the gray eyes, with all the yearnings of remembrance and affection.

They were holding each other closely when death completed the ritual.

In the last farewell the clenched hands of Octans opened. In the palm of the left hand lay the blue lotus, the lecherous lily of the slough.

There is a sender on a rock
  Listed as "B.—Gibral;"
Counting the Congo cable dead,
  This is the relay call.

Taking the leap of Spring Heel Jack
  Over the old Alham,
Bidding the Pyrenees stand aside—
  'Way for a radiogram.

Bearing the word of Afric storm—
  Naming the galleys down,
This is the flash of Spring Heel Jack,
  "A. P." to London Town.

—*Nathalia Crane*

Chapter XIII

LONDON

CONTINENTAL journals had noted the departure of a certain steam yacht, the *Colleen*, from the Severn, on October 9th, 1924.

The paragraphs from a London print are subjoined:

"Her Grace, Orena, Duchess of Kendal, last peeress of the lineage, renouncing her first London season, fares on a sea voyage, for the sake of her invalid aunt by marriage, Lady Mary Sutton. The steam yacht *Colleen*, owned by Her Grace, has been in commission since last spring.

"The yacht cleared from Cardiff yesterday for a cruise to the southward and along the Gold and Ivory Coasts. It is hoped that the sea air and the sprightly companionship of her niece will benefit the Lady Mary, although the pulmonary malady has been a persistent one. The Court and London must forego, for several months, the beauty and glamour of Her Grace."

In the *Naval Journal* of the same date appeared this jotting:

"Captain, Sir Richard Ware, R. N., who commanded the *Meteor* in the Jutland action, ramming and sinking one of the enemy's units, passes from the active list in another year. Sir Richard is now in command of the battle-cruiser *Hyacinth*, lying at Capetown. When Sir Richard is off the sea, he has a fair neighbor in the person of Her Grace, the young unwed Duchess of Kendal, for the estates of the two families are adjacent in the County of Somerset."

About six weeks later there trickled into the editorial rooms of the daily press the first meager news despatch concerning the havoc of a vindictive double tornado that had scourged the West African coast and had caused untold damage to shipping. The first flash came as a relayed message from the radio station at Gibraltar, and was almost immediately verified by a laconic military statement that aid was being sent to districts ravaged by an accompanying tidal wave. It was a typical

Gulf of Guinea storm, but one that defied the weather forecasters to give an estimate of its scope and fury.

With the first break, the cable and wire desks of the newspapers girded themselves to a coherent rendering of the frantic, jumbled messages that leaped from the clattering press association instruments. A score of freighters, several Cape Colony liners, and a scattering of foreign bottoms, trapped in the Gulf by the storm, were helpless or limping to the nearest coastal harborages, their decks a raffle of smashed bulwarks and superstructures.

It was while the cables were tugging with Madeira for the names of stranded or foundered craft that a lean ship-news reporter slipped under the adder eyes of his city editor the six-weeks-old paragraph about the *Colleen*.

RECONNAISSANCE

The fire-tail's egg is fettered by a hue,
  The turquoise tints an oval all its own;
But in the misty model of the tear
  There rests a mandate from another zone.

—*Nathalia Crane*

Chapter XIV

RECONNAISSANCE

At three o'clock in the morning, an hour after the death of Octans, the islet shivered from the shock of a shattering detonation. The reverberations shook the insular rim of cliffs and drew an echoing din from the mainland.

Three miles to seaward of the islet a dormant leviathan of steel, a gray cruiser, with hushed engines, dipped in the darkened swells. Out of the superstructure a red rocket flared upward. From the bridge of the cruiser a great beam of light, a visual pathway through the darkness, extended to the western façade of the buttress. It was no desultory inspection. The rays of the search-

light entered upon the outer orifice of the cavern.

The battlecraft was H. M. S. *Hyacinth*. For months her crew had conned the West African coast for specific castaways.

In the cipher files of the captain's desk there was the name of a missing steam yacht, the nine-hundred-ton schooner-rigged *Colleen*, of Cardiff. Cable and radio despatches told of disaster at some unknown point off the West African coast. There were also urgent Admiralty instructions. The yacht had been traced from the Severn to Madeira, and thence to a point off the West African coast near the Gaboon estuary. After that, the tornado.

There were five in the party aboard the *Colleen*, Orena Sulgrave, Duchess of Kendal, her aunt, the Lady Mary Sutton, two maids, the sisters Sheila and Lois O'Donnell, and Dolinda Hamilton, stewardess. The yacht was commanded by Captain Anthony Rossa

of Cardiff, an able navigator. The members of the crew were listed by name in the files.

After coaling at Madeira the yacht had headed for the Gold Coast, touching at two ports for curios. That she had ventured far to the southward was plain from the fact that she had coaled at the island of St. Thomas on November 20th and three days later had been spoken at sea by the *Tower Hill* of London some thirty miles off the estuary of the Gaboon.

The *Colleen's* sailing schedule called for her reappearance at Madeira on or about December 20th. The captain of the *Tower Hill* reported that when last seen the steam yacht was pointing into the northwest at about ten knots an hour. The *Tower Hill* soon afterward ran head on into the tornado, and later failed to report her encounter with the *Colleen.*

On January 1st, after vain cable inquiries, the British Admiralty directed that an ex-

haustive search be made for the derelict and for survivors.

A government despatch-boat commenced a reconnaissance of the Gold and Ivory Coasts, but the main burden of the search was laid upon Sir Richard Ware of the *Hyacinth*.

From Cape Frio the double-turreted battle-cruiser steamed northward the length of the Angolan coast. Daily there were landing parties. The trading stations and mat villages found tongue for prompt and appropriate response when snub-nosed ensigns went ashore in swift launches and pushed their terse inquiries to the point of actual search of certain areas. It was the most drastic search of a coast-line ever instituted; commencing far to the southward and extending steadily northward.

The barren and uninhabited stretches were not neglected. The reconnaissance embraced Loango and Kulla and the settlements between. The search for the *Colleen* became a

monotonous employment spread over many weeks, but the landing parties were thorough in their work. There was a tenacious old man in the captain's cabin and verbal reports were the order of the day.

The minute examination of the coast embraced all the scattered islands. Nyanga, Ngovi and Cape Lopez were inspected and finally the shore villages in the vicinity of the Gaboon.

On the evening of July 7th, 1925, the *Hyacinth*, having queried the Island of Corisco, swung northward for a rendezvous with a collier and a despatch-boat.

The sea-fighter surged lazily across the torrid swells, making no effort at speed. At seven minutes to three o'clock in the morning a lookout in the forward top reported a light two points off the starboard bow and a league distant.

For seven minutes the *Hyacinth* held to her course until a small island was directly

abeam. It was from a rocky bastion of the isle that the strange light glimmered.

The engines of the cruiser hushed their chanting. The forward turret revolved, and a tilted sixteen-inch twin vomited flame, smoke and disintegrating sound.

The uncharted beacon observed by the lookouts of the cruiser showed as a red dot upon the night-dimmed cliffs. It was caused by the now uncurtained flare of the braziers in the cavern, the illumination flooding the seaward passage.

In the chart-room of the cruiser, the executive and navigating officers were scanning a map upon which rested three-pronged compasses. The prongs were disposed in a triangle; one touched a delineation of Great Corisco, the other the African shore line, and the third pressed against the inky outline of a tiny islet girded by marine hieroglyphics that portrayed rocks, shoals and soundings.

It was the desert isle of Maya. The sea

literature at hand gave no definite information other than that it had never been inhabited and was without harborage.

Daylight disclosed the contour of the islet. It was a citadel of the sea, which presented only a ring of forbidding cliffs armed with striking salients. The gaunt shell afforded no glimpse of a concealed paradise of fruit and flower, no hint of the tragic sequences of youth and damsel, beast and reptile.

With the reddening of the eastern sky the war-ship released a boat that crept cautiously shoreward through the treacherous waters. Breakers were buffeting the crags on either side of the buttress arch of Maya, but opposite the entrance an oily swell ran evenly through the water gate. On a flood tide the pinnace pointed for the passage, lurched over the submerged ledge, and swept with drumming motor into the lagoon.

For the moment the white-clad naval men were dazzled by the mirrored green and gold

of the magic basin, the sorcery of the Sunken Garden, the tasseled grass plumes and tawny trees, the rainbow flight of brilliant birds. As the pinnace pivoted and shot to the sandy shingle, the boat's crew, from the quartermaster at the wheel to the bow boy squatting on a coil, sensed the significance of the setting.

Where the more robust tropical growths approached the midway margin of the pool, a group of mangroves mingled their branches. Under these trees there was a bamboo stand heaped with clusters of white blossoms. Beside the stand stood a girl in all the disarray of grief. She was clad in a girdled kirtle of dyed grasses. Her head was bowed and ringlets concealed her face. Like another Niobe, she seemed a beautiful statue of stone, the sculptured conception of sorrow.

So impelling, so absolute was the atmosphere of tragedy, that no hail came from the heavily manned boat. The bow slipped

backward from the scar in the sand, the pinnace floated idly.

For several minutes in complete silence the naval men gave themselves to contemplation. They did not speculate as to the identity of the lovely mourner beneath the trees. The personality and unconscious grace of the forlornly beautiful figure convinced them that the long search of the *Hyacinth* was at an end.

When the bow of the boat was again driven upon the sand, two officers left the pinnace. They were young, and one wore the insignia of a surgeon. They hastened across the beach to the border of the vale.

The castaway, roused from her grief, proudly raised her head and forestalled their salutations. Her gray eyes shone steadily, but the dusky red of a latent resentment burned in her cheeks. When the Englishmen halted, she leaned forward in the intenseness of her mood and spoke the first

words. She knew she was struggling for restrained speech, the rest was unreality. The jungle border and the pool became the evanescent embroidery of a dream, the men but ghostly personations from a long-forgotten past. Her very words seemed half-formed wraiths with countenances that stared and mocked the lips that gave them birth.

"Gentlemen, you have come at an inopportune hour, but the choice of time did not rest with you. If you seek survivors of the wrecked *Colleen*, your task is complete. All perished during the night of storm and fire, all but one, and that one you see. My aunt, my maids, my men went down with the *Colleen*. Lashed in a life-boat, I outrode the storm and found a haven here.

"I once prayed for rescue, wept and sought release, but that was long ago. Now I have another plan. I want to keep uninterrupted tryst with memory.

"For a time at least this isle must be my

only world. Some hurts are hard to heal, and solitude is best for weariness and woe.

"There are no words to change this mood. What you would say, advise, reprove, command, consider said. I stand upon my sovereign rights to stay alone upon this isle for comfort of communion and for prayer."

With hands still locked, the girl ceased to speak.

Remotely she was conscious that she was being addressed by one of the members of the landing party, and she strove to grasp the phrases and the familiar ring of something lost. The voice of the senior officer came to her from an interminable distance:

"Your Grace, His Majesty's Ship *Hyacinth*, commanded by your old friend, the friend of all your kinsmen, has covered months and many leagues in the search for the *Colleen*. We enter late, but not too late for service to yourself. Since our intrusion is by order of the empire, and since an urgent

duty demands a full report, we beg your patience. These are the confirmations we desire: your Grace desires to extend a now voluntary exile to an unnamed day, remaining sole tenant of this place until such time as you may change your mind. Meantime we ask permission for the landing of such stores and the erection of such shelters as may be requisite for your comfort. A country has been anxious all on your account these many months, and there are letters you may long to send."

The officer paused. He had traced other catastrophes of the sea to strange conclusions of privation, sickness and death. The living, dragged from derelicts or ragged reefs, had reacted to the hysteria of happiness. Here was a refugee born to rank and refinements of life, who, after months of loneliness upon a savage isle, relentlessly demanded isolation as a privilege. She was not an emaciated, fear-haunted female, a pitiful spectacle of tortur-

ing solitude. Though she showed signs of mourning, she was a queenly creature, embellished with all the blandishments of health and beauty.

It was a situation for which there were no orders.

The visitors waited for an answer.

Orena prayed inwardly for riddance from the dismaying presence of her kind. To her the strained conference was an ordeal. Grief numbed all the impulses of hope. She felt she was being subjected to a revolting espionage. All things dwindled before her longing for seclusion.

She gave her response slowly, rallying her wavering resolution for the repugnant task.

"If the officers of the *Hyacinth* are surprised at the choice of a single survivor of the *Colleen*, they at least have her gratitude, sincerely tendered. You spoke of stores and shelters. These I have. But what I crave is the unhindered occupancy of this isle. Since

I am satisfied with your sympathy, be satisfied with my thanks and seek no reversal of my decision."

The dignity, breeding, and rank of the refugee precluded argument. The officers bowed and murmured disconnected regrets. Then they wheeled and walked to the boat. The emergency chests were not landed, the bow was thrust from the sand, the pinnace swung on reversed screw, skimmed across the lagoon, and disappeared through the water gate.

Orena sank to the ground. There was still the hallucination that she was in the drag-net of a dreadful dream. The visit of the rescuers had raised agonizing questions. Why had they intruded at such an hour?

Once she permitted her gaze to sweep the borders of the wild and thankfully assured herself that there was no trace of the workshop where Octans had toiled for her. Why she was thankful, she did not know.

They had dismantled the unsightly shack of its fittings after the completion of the spinning-wheel. But there were the two benches beside the bamboo stand and a hunter's spear sticking in the soil.

She had not eaten since noon of that awful yesterday, and she welcomed the faintness that stole upon her. She nursed the delusion that Octans was not dead, and she listened for his homing cry from the Sunken Garden.

The water in the passage was shallowing rapidly when a rowboat slipped under the arch. Orena heard the castinet-like click of the oars in the locks. She did not move. Her rescuers were persistent, but she would not yield and desert her dead.

The boat was propelled by an old Negro, long a servitor. In the stern there stood a gray-haired man, clad as a captain, but he wore no side arms, and the mild instructions to the rower were given as to an equal and a friend.

The cedar shell glided along the edge of the lagoon to the point where the pinnace had landed. The bearded one stepped from the boat and signaled with his hand. The Negro pushed off the skiff and rowed out of the pool.

The tide was falling, and soon the locking ledges of the water gate would bar all entrance until the evening flood.

There were now two prisoners on the isle, but the man seemed more concerned with the luxuriance of the border than with the abject figure beside the bamboo flower stand.

His eyes were drawn only by the natural adaptations and proportions of the place. Twice he passed within a few feet of the damsel only to continue his survey, but on a third occasion he planted himself beside the flower weaver and spoke with low deliberation, not as the captain of a battle-cruiser, but as a benign patriarch. His words were vaguely addressed by turns to the palms, the

cliffs, and the burnished pool. Orena heard and gathered them to her heart.

"Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, there was an old man, gray from many fights, who told his strangest tales upon a lawn before a stately home. Among those who listened was a little girl. That was at Kendal Castle, in our England, once upon a time.

"A whole summer afternoon that little damsel stayed and heard of men and ships and guns and actions fought. She said she would never forget the old man of the sea. She trusted him, she said, and thought the king was shrewd to keep him in employ."

Orena stumbled to her feet. With vision dimmed by tears she clutched the stand for support and faced her tormentor. She tried to snatch a name from memory, the while the imperturbable intruder continued his reminiscent address to the palms.

"She said his stories sounded true, and she would like him near her in a pinch, when

things were all upset. She was glad she had so staunch a friend.

"And so the old man went away, content to think he could serve a damsel in a pinch. His name was Richard Ware.

"The years brought a storm; there was a wreck, and things were indeed all upset. Ah, well. The old man found his little friend. Then he learned that those who serve in pinches are not worth their salt. He had not dreamed she could quite forget."

Orena ran to the waiting arms of the comrade of her childhood.

"I do remember. I do remember," she sobbed.

Beneath the trees she whispered all her woe, to one too old, too wise to raise his eyes, yet who understood, and sympathized, and soothed.

She sobbingly told of the tornado and of her escape from the lashings of the wrecked life-boat; of the finding of Octans wounded

on the ledge; of their months of close companionship; of her consort's death. Then she showed the wondrous golden cup suspended from her neck and told the full story of her youthful Crusader. She led her old friend to the pinnacle rock, where he gazed long upon the noble names of the children. Then she guided him through the Sunken Garden that he might see for himself the haunt of the ophidian. But of the python she could not speak.

Among the trunk-like stems of the ferns the captain of the *Hyacinth* saw the careened carcass of the monstrous serpent. From the breached head protruded the avenging lance-head.

Orena held aloof, but on their return to the lagoon she described the miraculous visions that had been hers.

Lastly their steps tended toward the cavern.

In the great chamber the flames still flick-

ered over the masses of resin in the basins of the braziers.

The girl knelt beside the dais and prayed for the soul of Octans. The form of the youth, covered by a woven counterpane, reposed upon the daised couch in all the solemnity of death. Flowers plucked in the dawn were strewn over the covering.

For a long time the captain of the *Hyacinth* stood with bowed head, deeply moved by the misery, the wonder, and the mystery of the death chamber.

Then, vibrantly, there rang through the crypt the portentous words of the burial service of the Church of England, terrible in grandeur, but carrying the everlasting pity of God.

"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

There was sanctification for the spirit in the majesty of the sentences.

"Man that is born of woman. . . . He cometh up and is cut down like a flower. . . . From henceforth blessed are the dead."

The air was heavy with incense.

The stillness, thereafter, was broken only by the sound of weeping.

Twilight found the two upon the shore of the lagoon. When the silent boatman again rowed over the water, he received an order and vanished in the gloom of the arch. Together youth and age paced the sands in communion. The starry night was filled with the sweet odors of the wild. Age talked of days to come; youth longed only for the past.

As comrades reason together, so they spoke in that last hour upon the isle, and the girl saw that there are things toc eloquent, too perfect for perpetual retention in this life.

Her old friend subdued the rebellious bitterness of her heart. There was faith, he said, faith, the eventual restorer of all lost and lovely things. It was to be the foundation of all her future visions and would lead her in the end to the solace of an eternal companionship with the one she loved. He told her that the islands of the blessed lie in the soul, easy of access to a mind content, and that out of memory are drawn the deep inspirations, the bridges to resignation and peace.

In the end he spoke of England and duty, and his fair listener humbly gave consent.

Together they returned to the cavern. The golden candlesticks were refilled, and the tapers lighted. The braziers were heaped with scented resins and flamed again. Then the old man and the girl knelt in a prayer, and Orena, Duchess of Kendal, gave the last kiss to her consort.

The solitary boatman loomed in the still-

ness of the night. The cedar shell grounded close to the latticed bower.

Orena felt a gentle, faithful hand urging her into the boat. She obeyed the pressure, but her tearful eyes were upon the darkened aisles of the Sunken Garden. Someone was calling to her in the dear, familiar way. She extended her arms in entreaty.

With a gentle dipping of oars, the boat receded from the sandy margin, drifted slowly across the bosom of the basin, and vanished in the Night.

THE END